SPECIAL EDITION

Since 1877 - Best for Local News and Advertising

The Newtown Bee

Commemorating The Lives Lost In Sandy Hook On December 14, 2012

VOLUME CXXXIV *Complimentary Issue* NEWTOWN, CONNECTICUT, MONDAY, DECEMBER 17, 2012 *Complimentary Issue* SPECIAL EDITION

On Friday, December 14, Sandy Hook Elementary School students and faculty put into practice safety precautions administrators never hoped to use: the evacuation of the building in an emergency. These students, accompanied by a pair of state troopers and another pair of school employees, were among the first to safely move to Sandy Hook Fire's main station after Sandy Hook resident Adam Lanza had entered their school and shot 28 people inside the building, 26 of whom died. —Bee Photo, Hicks

EDITORIAL INK DROPS

Answering For Our Town

The holiday season had already settled over Newtown like a snow globe, and the spirited center of Sandy Hook glittered with lights and bubbled with good cheer. Then on Friday morning a young man filled with anger and trouble, armed beyond reason, took deadly aim at Sandy Hook's true heart — its elementary school. The violence wrought in the next several minutes left 26 dead, mostly 6- and 7-year-olds and several of the adults who tried to protect them. The scale and the horror of the crime still outpaces our capacity to understand it. We expect it always will.

The shootings at Sandy Hook Elementary School shook and shattered the spell of Newtown's picturesque holiday traditions, and the anguish and grief that spilled out of us was delivered to the world by legions of journalists arriving in caravans of satellite trucks as if drawn by some dark star of calamity. What they found when they got to town, however, was not a town in pieces, but a community already coming together, with friends, neighbors, and mere acquaintances gathering around those most grievously wounded, and supporting each other, as the people in this town have always done. Inevitably, because we are the town that we are, that became the story broadcast to the world.

So many people in town have been interviewed by journalists who have never been to Newtown before. Some have never been to New England before. Of the many inquiries *The Bee* received from journalists around the country and abroad, we were struck by the curiosity of two television news crews from Germany and Denmark who presented themselves in our lobby with questions which we are sure were asked repeatedly of people all over town. The questions went to the character of our town. Two questions were typical.

Did you ever in your wildest imagination think that such a tragedy could happen in Newtown?

The answer, unexpected as it may seem for this stock question, is yes. Newtown is not a sleepy town, as some seemed to think. And its people are not unthinking or without sophistication. It turns out we are imaginative, and whenever we have heard of other places wounded by hideous crimes, like Columbine or Virginia Tech, our wild imaginings did consider the possibility of it happening here. Our school personnel and emergency responders prepared and trained for such an improbable occurrence, and that forethought and training certainly saved lives. Knowing what we know now, we would characterize those imaginings as being more rational than wild.

These shootings have certainly changed the town, so how will Newtown get over this, and where will the town go from here?

Yes, the killings at Sandy Hook School have turned the town upside down. How and when we get our bearings straight depends on the uncertain requirements and timetable of emotional healing, which varies for each of us. But we are already on our way, buoyed not only by the poignant vigils and religious services of this past weekend, but by the outpouring of support for our town from around the world. When the President of the United States comes to grieve with us, the world watches and shares our sorrow and supports our recovery. In this special edition, we share a sampling of the hundreds of messages of heartfelt concern and support that have come in to *The Bee* from around the nation and the world. This collective focus of concern for our town and for the hardships of our people is not without meaning or consequence. It makes real the holiday wish from St Luke that so often is repeated by rote: And On Earth, Goodwill Toward Men.

As to where we go from here, we answer, as always, that in setting our sights on the future, we take direction from our past. From the 300 years of Newtown's history, the community has inherited a legacy of independence of spirit, self-awareness, and community action. People take care of each other here; there is 135 years of evidence of that in the pages of *The Bee*. That story will not change in the future. But our community has suffered a

28 People Dead—

Town Grieves Following Mass Murder At Sandy Hook Elementary School

By Andrew Gorosko

State police, town police, and other law enforcement agencies on Sunday continued their investigation into the horrific shooting deaths of 28 people on Friday, December 14, in which 27 people died at Sandy Hook Elementary School, including 20 first-graders and six school staff members, after an assailant forcibly entered the building and opened fire with a powerful assault rifle.

The shooter, Adam Lanza, 20, of 36 Yogananda Street, Sandy Hook, also had shot and killed his mother Nancy Lanza, 52, at their residence before driving to the school and killing 26 people, police said.

Lanza then fatally shot himself at the school.

Killed at the school were eight boys and 12 girls, as well as school Principal Dawn Hochsprung, 47, and five other school staff members.

Also, two people were injured in the incident at the school, according to police.

The school attack has rocked the community, with people expressing feelings of heartbreak and anguish over the killings.

The incident has drawn condolences from across the world, as well as a visit by President Barack Obama to console the survivors of the deceased.

On Sunday, Pope Benedict XVI, speaking in English, said he was "deeply saddened by Friday's senseless violence in Newtown, Connecticut."

The mass murder has drawn media attention from around the world, with hundreds of journalists coming to Newtown to cover the incident.

According to state police, on Friday at about 9:30 am., Newtown police received an emergency 911 telephone call for help from Sandy Hook School at 12 Dickinson Drive, after which town police immediately responded to the scene.

Newtown police called for assistance from state police and police in other municipalities. Both on-duty and off-duty state troopers responded to the school.

Teams of police officers expedited the evacuation of students holding on to each other — many with their eyes closed — and school staffers from the building, getting them to the safety of the nearby Sandy Hook Firehouse on Riverside Road.

Police then searched the school for the shooter, according to Lieutenant J. Paul Vance, state police spokesman.

Inside the school, police search teams found students and school staffers, most with mortal gunshot wounds. After the shooter was found dead inside the building, ambulance personnel were called to provide medical care for the wounded, Lt Vance said.

"Eighteen children were pronounced dead at the scene; two children were transported to Danbury Hospital and later pronounced dead. Six adult victims also were pronounced dead at the scene," Lt Vance said.

The shooter also was pronounced dead at the scene.

The killings occurred in two classrooms and a hallway in one section of the school.

At the request of Newtown Police Chief Michael Kehoe and Danbury State's Attorney Stephen J. Sedensky III, two units of the state police's Major Crime Squad responded to the school to conduct the crime investigation. Multiple local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies are assisting in the probe.

The investigation has involved documenting the physical condition of the crime scene, including the collection of physical and forensic evidence, according to Lt Vance.

Working with staff from the chief state medical examiner's office, police were able to identify 26 victims, who were the students and school staffers, overnight on December 14–15. The next of kin were notified that positive identification was made, Lt Vance said.

A state police officer was assigned to serve as a liaison with each victim's family to keep open lines of communication with the survivors.

State medical examiner staff members transported the victims to Farmington where autopsies were performed, through which the cause of death of 26 homicides was determined to be gunshot wounds, according to Lt Vance.

Second Crime Scene

The Yogananda Street residence was a second crime scene in the case. On Sunday morning, police investigators who were working there blocked access to that home.

"A female was located deceased inside the residence," Lt Vance said, resulting a third unit of the major crime squad investigating there.

Lt Vance said Saturday it is expected that investigatory work at the school will take "several days" to complete.

Chief State Medical Examiner H. Wayne Carver II, MD, who performed some of the autopsies on the deceased, said that the case is probably the worst homicide case that he has ever investigated.

At the school, 12 girls and eight boys died in the incident. Sixteen of the children were age 6 and the others were age 7. The six adult female victims ranged from age 27 to 56.

First Selectman Pat Llodra said, "Newtown has suffered a horrible tragedy…[It] has broken our hearts.

"I think we are all touched by the magnitude of this tragedy," she said.

The shooter used an assault rifle as the primary weapon, Dr Carver said.

Medical examiner staffers worked within a temporary shelter that was set up in the parking lot at the school, he said.

The autopsies on Adam Lanza and Nancy Lanza that were completed on Sunday indicat-

(continued on page S-4)

President, Clergy, Officials Unite To Begin The Healing

By John Voket

At a memorial service Sunday evening at Newtown High School as the eyes of the world continued to focus on Newtown, President Barack Obama, Governor Dannel Malloy and First Selectman Pat Llodra joined many local clergy members who rushed to the scene of the Sandy Hook School shooting two days earlier trying as best they could to comfort the victims' families and co-workers.

The President was for the most part reserved, but at the same time impassioned as he took time to recognize the ultimate sacrifice of school staffers who perished, and to recite the names of the children who were

tunity pass to put America and Congress on notice that some type of change was coming in regard to the nation's current stance on providing and keeping firearms.

"We can't tolerate this anymore. These tragedies must end. And to end them, we must change," he said. "We will be told that the causes of such violence are complex, and that is true. No single law — no set of laws can eliminate evil from the world, or prevent every senseless act of violence in our society.

"But that can't be an excuse for inaction," the President continued. "Surely, we can do better than this. If there is even

INDEX

www.thebee.com

At The Firehouse 7
Clergy Reach Out 2
How Parents Explain .6
Letter Hive 8-9
Obituaries 2
Move To Chalk Hill . . .3
Stories Of Heroism . . .6

The Newtown Bee
"PRSRT STD"
POSTAGE & FEES PAID
NEWTOWN, CT 06470
PERMIT NO. 27

https://issuu.pdf-downloader.com/print.php?documentId=130225204108-072447ea43a7462a929c027076dc406e&count=10 11/29/25, 1:41 PM
Page 1 of 20

grievous wound — a wound that will leave an obvious scar. From now on, when people learn that we are from Newtown, they will focus on that scar, and perhaps, impolitely, it will be the first thing they ask about our town. We will never hide it or apologize for it. It is the mark left behind by so many innocents who were violently torn from the embrace of our community on December 14, 2012. We will never forget them. And our message to the rest of the world, which is listening so closely to us now: remember the great promise of all the lives of the children and the educators who died at Sandy Hook Elementary School, and live accordingly.

taken that fateful morning.

"We gather here in memory of 20 beautiful children and six remarkable adults. They lost their lives in a school that could have been any school; in a quiet town full of good and decent people that could be any town in America," President Obama said.

And he did not let the oppor-

President Obama told a somber gathering at the Newtown High School auditorium, "We can't tolerate this anymore. These tragedies must end. And to end them, we must change."
—Bee Photo, Bobowick

one step we can take to save another child, or another parent, or another town, from the grief that has visited Tucson, and Aurora, and Oak Creek, and Newtown, and communities from Columbine to Blacksburg before that — then surely we have an obligation to try."

(continued on page S-10)

Stay Current With Events As They Unfold At NewtownBee.com

THE VICTIMS

The Children

Charlotte Bacon, 6

Daniel Barden, 7

Olivia Engel, 6

Josephine Gay, 7

Ana M Marquez-Greene, 6

Dylan Hockley, 6

Madeleine F. Hsu, 6

Catherine V. Hubbard, 6

Chase Kowalski, 7

Jesse Lewis, 6

James Mattioli, 6

Grace McDonnell, 7

Emilie Parker, 6

Jack Pinto, 6

Noah Pozner, 6

Caroline Previdi, 6

Jessica Rekos, 6

Avielle Richman, 6

Benjamin Wheeler, 6

Allison N. Wyatt, 6

The Adults

Rachel Davino, 29

Dawn Hochsprung, 47

Nancy Lanza, 52

Anne Marie Murphy, 52

Lauren Rousseau, 30

OBITUARIES

The following is only a partial list of obituaries resulting from the December 14 tragedy at Sandy Hook Elementary School. Please check newtownbee.com for updated information in days to come.

Jessica Adrienne Rekos

Jessica Adrienne Rekos

Jessica Adrienne Rekos, 6, beloved and cherished daughter of Richard S. and Krista A. Lehmann Rekos of Sandy Hook, died tragically, December 14, with her friends and classmates at Sandy Hook Elementary School. Born in Danbury May 10, 2006, she was a lifelong resident of Sandy Hook.

Jessica loved horseback riding, learning about orcas, writing, and playing with her little brothers.

In addition to her parents, her brothers Travis J. and Shane S. Rekos of Sandy Hook; maternal grandparents John E. and Suzanne A. Lehmann of Groveland, Fla.; paternal grandfather Richard J. Rekos, and his wife Mary, of Danbury; paternal grandmother Mary Anne Mellny Rekos of Monroe; aunts Karyn Lehmann of Groveland, Fla., and Karla (Lehmann) Lafferty and her husband, Jack, of Clermont, Fla.; uncles Brian Rekos, and his girlfriend Cathy Byrne, of Newtown, Craig Lehmann, and his wife Maureen, of Weeki Wachee, Fla., and Kurt Lehmann and his wife, Marion, of Belle Mead, N.J.; and cousins Kaitlin, Samantha, Connor, Erin, and Kelly survive Jessica.

Funeral services will be held Tuesday, December 18, at noon, at St Rose of Lima Church, Newtown.

Memorial contributions may be made to the Newtown Rotary Sandy Hook School Fund, PO Box 263, Newtown CT 06482.

The Honan Funeral Home, 58 Main Street, Newtown, is in care of arrangements.

The Newtown Bee, Special Edition December 17, 2012

Jack Armistead Pinto

Jack Armistead Pinto

Jack Armistead Pinto, 6, of Sandy Hook, died December 14, in Sandy Hook Elementary School, in the company of his many friends, classmates, and teachers. Jack was the son of Tricia (Volkmann) and Dean Pinto. He was born in Danbury, May 6, 2006. At the time of his death, Jack was a first grade student at Sandy Hook Elementary School.

Besides his parents, his brother Benjamin A. Pinto; maternal grandparents Alfred Volkmann and Laurine (Rothe) Volkmann of Shoreham, N.Y.; paternal grandparents Anthony Pinto and June (DeChello) Pinto of North Haven; his aunts Karen Volkmann of New York and Mia Pinto of East Haven; his godparents Alan Zaccaro and Mia Pinto; and his good friend John "JJ" Haddick survive Jack.

Jack was an avid participant in a wide variety of activities including flag football, baseball, basketball, wrestling, and snow skiing. Jack was an incredibly loving and vivacious young boy, appreciated by all who

Charlotte Helen Bacon

Charlotte Helen Bacon, 6, was the beloved daughter of Joel and JoAnn Bacon, and sister of Guy Bacon. She died tragically December 14, with her friends and classmates at Sandy Hook Elementary School.

Charlotte was an extraordinarily gifted 6-year-old who filled her family each day with joy and love. The family will forever remember her beautiful smile, her energy for life, and the unique way she expressed her individuality, usually with the color pink. Charlotte never met an animal she didn't love, and since the age of 2 wanted to be a veterinarian. She also enjoyed practicing Tae Kwon Do weekly with her dad and brother, where she relished kicking and throwing punches.

Charlotte has left a place in her entire extended family's hearts that will never be replaced. The family is profoundly grateful for the thoughts and prayers of the many friends around the world who have expressed their sympathies. They trust in the depths of God's grace and with confidence know that Charlotte rests in God's arms.

Charlotte Helen Bacon

Friends may visit with Charlotte's family Tuesday, December 18, from 4 to 7 pm, at Christ the King Lutheran Church, 85 Mt Pleasant Road, Newtown. Her funeral service will take place Wednesday, December 19, at 1 pm, also at the church, followed by her burial in Newtown Village Cemetery.

The family asks that the media please respect their privacy at this time.

In lieu of flowers, contributions in her memory may be sent to Christ the King Lutheran Church, 85 Mt Pleasant Road, Newtown CT 06470.

The Honan Funeral Home, 58 Main Street, Newtown, is in care of arrangements.

The Newtown Bee, Special Edition December 17, 2012

Daniel Gerard Barden

Daniel Gerard Barden, 7, of Sandy Hook, born September 27, 2005, in Pawling, N.Y., cherished son of Jacqueline and Mark, beloved brother of James and Natalie, left the physical world too soon, on December 14.

Daniel was the light of his family's life. Adored and admired by all, Daniel touched the lives of all who knew him with his warmth, inspiring spirit of kindness, and generosity, outgoing and affectionate nature, and his imaginative play.

He loved spending time with his family, both immediate and extended, riding waves at the beach, playing the drums in a band with his brother James and sister Natalie, foosball, reading, and making s'mores around the bonfire with his cousins at his "Papa's" house in Smallwood, N.Y. Daniel was on the Newtown soccer team and the Newtown Torpedoes swim team.

In addition to his immediate family, Daniel is survived by his grandmother Anne Barden of Yonkers, N.Y., and grandfather Martin Giblin of Smallwood, N.Y. Daniel leaves behind many aunts, uncles, and cousins who will miss him immensely: Rosaleen Giblin Murchison and husband Peter of Ridgefield, and their children Cristen, John, Michael, and Matthew, and his wife Lizzie; Martin Giblin of Bronxville, N.Y.; Michael Giblin of Frederick, Md., and his daughters Laura, Madeline, Jackie Pickett and husband Duane, and their children Mariah, and Neil, and Corrinne Downs and husband Kenny, and their children Audrey and Leah; Madeline Giblin O'Neill and husband Michael, and their daughter, Lauren, of Ridgefield; James Giblin of the Bronx, N.Y.; Donald Giblin and wife Cathy, and their children Gerard, Jamie, and Catherine of Yorktown Heights, N.Y.; Kathleen Giblin of Rhinebeck, N.Y.; Christine Giblin Risoli and husband Matthew,

and their children Michael and Jane of Newtown; James Barden of New York City; Timothy Barden and wife Mary, and their daughter Anna of Portland, Maine; and Carl Barden of Deland, Fla. Daniel was preceded in death by his grandmother Madeline Giblin; grandfather James Barden, Sr; and uncle Gerard Paul Giblin.

A celebration of Daniel's life will begin with a wake, Tuesday, December 18, from 5 to 8 pm, at St Rose of Lima Catholic Church, 46 Church Street, Newtown. A funeral will follow Wednesday, December 19, at 10am, at St Rose.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made in Daniel's name to the Sandy Hook School Support Fund, c/o Newtown Savings Bank, 39 Main Street, Newtown CT 06470, or checks may be dropped off at any Newtown Savings Bank branch location. To donate online, go to https://newtown.uwwesternct.org

Online condolences for the family may be expressed at www.legacy.com/guestbooks/guestbook.aspx?n=daniel-barden&pid=161725981.

The Newtown Bee, Special Edition December 17, 2012

Dawn Lafferty Hochsprung

Dawn Lafferty Hochsprung, 47, of Woodbury, died December 14, as the result of the tragic events that unfolded at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown.

Beloved daughter, mother, wife, grandmother, and friend, she was a dedicated teacher who inspired her students to reach their fullest potential by instilling in them the importance of life-long learning. A fierce leader and educational activist, Ms Hochsprung was admired by her colleagues, students, and parents, particularly for her caring and nurturing nature. She often referred to her students as her "children" and wanted school to be a positive place and a safe haven.

A graduate of Naugatuck High School Class of 1983, Ms Hochsprung discovered the power of knowledge that led her to pursue a career in education. She received her bachelor's degree in special education from Central Connecticut State University and her master's degree in education from Southern Connecticut State University. She was currently enrolled at Russell Sage College in Troy, N.Y., pursuing her PhD — a testament to her own personal mission to continue learning and lead by example.

Above all, she was extremely devoted to her family. There was nothing in the world she would not do to ensure that her family was happy and safe. She often credited her mother, Cheryl "Gee Gee" Lafferty for instilling in her the importance of family, and never taking them for granted.

Her husband George Hochsprung; her mother Cheryl Lafferty; two daughters, Cristina Lafferty Hassinger and Erica Lafferty; a brother Daniel Lafferty; three grandsons and a granddaughter; three step-daughters, Anne Priest, Amy Lawton, and Beth Ewaskiewicz; and several aunts, uncles, and cousins survive Ms Hochsprung. Her father, William Lafferty, died in 2004.

Calling hours will take place Wednesday, December 19, from 3 to 8 pm, at the Woodbury Funeral Home of Munson-Lovetere, 2 School Street, Woodbury. Burial will be private.

Memorial donations may be made to Newtown Rotary Sandy Hook School Fund, PO Box 263, Newtown CT 06482.

To place an on-line condolence, visit www.munsonloveterefuneralhome.com.

The Newtown Bee, Special Edition December 17, 2012

Catherine Violet Hubbard

Catherine Violet Hubbard, 6, born June 8, 2006, died December 14, during the tragedy at Sandy Hook Elementary School.

Her older brother, Frederick William; her parents Jennifer and Matthew; her grandparents Susan and Leo Sullivan and her great-grandmother Geraldine Russell Holden, all of West Chester, Penn.; Nancy and Earl Hubbard of Chatham, Mass.; and four uncles, four aunts, and nine cousins survive Catherine.

She will be remembered for her passion for animals and constant smile. Her family prays that she, all the students of Sandy Hook Elementary, and all those affected by this brutal event find peace in their hearts.

A wake is scheduled for Wednesday, December 19, from 4 to 7 pm, at St Rose of Lima Church, 46 Church Hill Road, Newtown. A funeral Mass is scheduled for Thursday, December 20, at 10 am, at St Rose.

In lieu of flowers the family is requesting donations be made to the Newtown Animal Center, PO Box 475, Newtown CT 06470.

The Honan Funeral Home, 58 Main Street, Newtown, is in care of arrangements.

The Newtown Bee, Special Edition December 17, 2012

Dylan Christopher Jack Hockley

Dylan Christopher Jack Hockley, 6, beloved and cherished son of Ian Thomas and Nicole Marie (Moretti) Hockley of Sandy Hook, died tragically, December 14, with his friends, classmates, and teachers at Sandy Hook Elementary School. Dylan was born in Winchester, England, March 8, 2006.

In addition to his parents, his brother Jake Alexander Hockley of Sandy Hook; maternal grandparents Henry and Theresa (Gobidas) Moretti of Cranston, R.I.; paternal grandpar-

A woman kneels in prayer outside of St Rose of Lima Catholic Church, Friday evening, December 14, following a special service to honor the memories of children and staff of Sandy Hook School, murdered that morning by a lone shooter. Thousands attended the vigil, pouring out of the church onto the driveway and lawns surrounding the Church Hill Road church.
—Bee Photo, Bobowick

Clergy Reach Out To Shepherd Community

By Nancy K. Crevier

Newtown clergy have reached out, along with community members and people worldwide, to support families directly and indirectly affected by the tragic shootings at Sandy Hook School, Friday morning, December 14. Numerous congregations hosted prayer vigils and services Friday evening, following a day in which members of the clergy ministered to those in greatest need at the Sandy Hook Firehouse.

"We are still thinking how best to respond," said Grace Family Church children and youth pastor, Reverend Adam Fredericks, Saturday morning, in a shaken voice that echoed the feelings of the entire Newtown community. "The generosity of our community is overwhelming. Everyone wants to make huge sacrifices to help those who have lost loved ones," he said.

A prayer vigil on Friday evening drew a great number of people seeking solace, said Rev Fredericks. "Nothing will bring those children back, but prayers and a listening ear, and compassion can help to soothe," he said.

He and fellow ministers Reverend Barry Fredericks, Reverend Sheila Fredericks, and Reverend John Barago all fielded calls and e-mails until late Friday night and again on Saturday, said Rev Fredericks, and were reaching out to church family members and others to make sure they were okay.

"People are wanting to know how this could happen, and where these children are now," he said. "We believe God would never cause tragedy to happen. He is there to comfort families and the children are with him now, in Heaven, without a doubt. God did not take these children," he stressed.

Regular and holiday service will go forward as planned, at this time, at Grace Family Church, located at 174 Mt Pleasant Road, Newtown.

How a tragedy like this could unfold in Newtown is the question that Reverend James Solomon of New Hope Community Church has been repeatedly asked since Friday morning, as well, he said. Rev Solomon spent a great part of Friday tending to those burdened by grief at the Sandy Hook Firehouse.

The parent of children at Reed Intermediate and Newtown Middle School himself, he said that when the news of a shooting at a school reached him and his wife on Friday morning, their hearts stopped.

"I find that mostly, right now, people are looking for an opportunity to cry on an understanding shoulder. They need support in not giving up," he said. As a counselor, as well as a minister, Rev Solomon noted that many will be in need of long term support and encouragement, in helping to turn their trials into triumph.

"People are shocked still," said Rev Solomon on Saturday morning. "But I think the community will focus on what is most important in life. People are already seeing that life is not about power and prestige. They are wondering, how can I best live my life?" he said.

Rev Solomon also said that the people he has counseled are having difficulty in forgiving Adam Lanza, the shooter identified by law enforcement sources. "[He] took the lives of children who have barely lived. They feel they have been robbed. It will take a long time to heal the hurt in their hearts," he said. "But when you do not forgive. You let [the shooter] live in your head, what I call 'rent free.'"

"My goal," said Rev Solomon, "has been letting [families] know that the spirits of their children can live on in their hearts."

Prayer Services

A special prayer service took place Saturday, December 15, at 7 pm, at the Newtown Meeting House, Main Street, where New Hope Community Church meets.

Rev Solomon amended his Advent message planned for Sunday morning, December 16, to reflect a message of God's comfort in crisis, he said. At this time, the special Christmas service, Sunday December 23, led by the children of the congregation, will go on as planned.

For more information or counseling information, call 203-770-3745.

Newtown United Methodist Church (NUMC) postponed the children's pageant rehearsal scheduled for Sunday, December 16, according to church secretary Barbara Carlson on Saturday.

Younger children were read the Christmas story at Sunday services and then were involved in a craft project.

The congregation gathered for a meal following the 10 am service, and Christmas caroling scheduled following the 10 am service was postponed.

Newtown Congregational Church, 14 West Street, offered solace at a special service Friday, and a special prayer service, Saturday evening, said Rev Matthew Crebbin. The church was open all day on Saturday for those seeking a quiet place to reflect, and regional and congregational pastors were available on Sunday to talk with those in need, he said.

Regular church service took place Sunday, at 10 am. "It's important to hold onto a piece of the normalcy of our lives, even as we acknowledge things are not normal," said Rev Crebbin, who was among the clergy administering to families, Friday, at the Sandy Hook Fire House, after the shooting.

"People are in shock," said Rev Crebbin, Saturday morning, echoing his colleagues' sentiments. "At this point, people are looking to be present with others, to hold them physically and mentally, whether they have been directly or indirectly affected [by the shootings at the school]. We will try to hold people with care and support and listening," he said.

The staff at Newtown Congregational Church is reaching out not only to church members, but to anyone in the community who may not have a church home. "We know that people are looking to make a connection. They need a place to be and try to process this, and not be alone. That's important," said Rev Crebbin.

Christmas services for the upcoming week will remain as planned, said Rev Crebbin, including the December 24 children's pageant.

Connections Church, which meets Sundays in Edmond Town Hall, was working with The Learning Experience in Plaza South, in hopes of scheduling a grief counseling night at the children's development center. Pastor Bobbi Veach said that updated information as that event unfolded would be posted at rockyveach.com.

"The big question," said Pastor Veach, "is how to reach out. We are all praying for the authorities involved [in Friday's shooting] and for the families. We have people literally wanting to help in myriad ways," she said.

Al Hedaya Islamic Center, 115 Mt Pleasant Road, held prayer services for

Mary Sherlach, 56

Victoria Soto, 27

knew him for his lively and giving spirit and steely determination.

In life and in death, Jack will forever be remembered for the immeasurable joy he brought to all who had the pleasure of knowing him, a joy whose wide reach belied his six short years.

The Honan Funeral Home, 58 Main Street, Newtown, is in care of arrangements.

The Newtown Bee, Special Edition December 17, 2012

Daniel Gerard Barden

ents Thomas and Ivy (Dawn) Hockley of Eastrea, England; and uncles Kevin Hockley of Peterborough, England, and Gary Hockley of Chicago, Ill., survive Dylan.

Funeral services are private.

Memorial contributions may be made to the Dylan Hockley Memorial Fund, 34 Charter Ridge Road, Sandy Hook CT 06482.

The Honan Funeral home, 58 Main Street, Newtown, is in care of arrangements.

The Newtown Bee, Special Edition December 17, 2012

the community, Sunday, at their Community Center at that address. For more information visit msgdanbury.org.

An Interfaith Service was conducted Sunday evening for victims' families and Sandy Hook School families only, at the Newtown High School.

St Rose of Lima Catholic Church held a prayer vigil attended by thousands on Friday evening, and was open for support and consolation all day on Saturday. A special Living Nativity took place there following the Saturday evening 5:30 Mass. For updated information on any special services or Christmas programs at St Rose, visit www.StRoseChurch.com.

For a complete listing of local and area churches and contact information, see the December 14 issue of *The Newtown Bee*.

Friday's Victims Carried Sandy Hook School's Spirit To The End

By Eliza Hallabeck

A few hours after the list of Sandy Hook School's fallen was released on Friday, December 14, Newtown High School Principal Charles Dumais tweeted "Remember…" for each name and birth date.

Remember, remember, remember.

Sandy Hook School's colors are green and white and its mascot is an Eagle. It's easy to remember. The school has a group of students called Project Eagle that give back to the community. As Sandy Hook School Principal Dawn Hochsprung told the Board of Education last April, "The group that we have here certainly embodies the spirit of giving back to the community that has given to them."

Ms Hochsprung, who was 47, and Sandy Hook School psychologist Mary Sherlach, 56, were, by accounts, the first victims during Friday's shooting.

"All of those adults in the building on that horrific morning are heroes. They did whatever they could to protect those innocent little children, six of them sacrificing their own lives," said Head O' Meadow Principal Barbara Gasparine. "Dawn's quick thinking in the midst of a crisis, as she flipped on the overhead paging system, saved hundreds of lives. She was a sterling administrator and a courageous individual."

Flash back to Wednesday, December 12, when Sandy Hook School fourth graders, dressed in black pants and white tops, sang during a school assembly to prepare for the school's Winter Concert.

Ms Hochsprung walked in silently that Wednesday as the children sang, leaned against the school cafeteria wall and whispered a reporter, "Aren't they amazing?"

Her iPad was in hand, and moments later she sent a photo out on her Twitter account of that assembly with, "Sandy Hook students enjoy the rehearsal for our 4th grade winter concert — a talented group led by Maryrose Kristopik!"

When *The Bee* first met Dawn Hochsprung, she was smiling and interacting with Middle Gate Principal Chris Geissler during a June 2010 interview, as new principals in town.

According to a press release from the Board of Education at the time, Ms Hochsprung, a Woodbury resident, came to the district with 12 years of experience as an administrator. Six of those years were served as assistant principal within the Danbury Public School System; five years at Rogers Park Middle School from 1998 to 2003 and one year at Danbury High School, 2003 to 2004.

"Dawn was a passionate administrator who was full of life," said Ms Gasparine. "She was extremely bright, quick witted, and articulate. She loved having fun with her students on Wacky Wednesdays and during March Madness, both of which she introduced to the school. She was a vital member of our kindergarten through sixth grade principals team and her collaborative contributions will be missed. So will her smile."

Hawley Elementary School Principal Jo-Ann Peters said, "Dawn was a vibrant, passionate administrator, who was not afraid to voice her opinion. She wanted learning to be meaningful, having fun was important to Dawn. She often filled our conversations with laughter!"

Ms Hochsprung regularly attended Board of Education meetings, often responding when called upon by school board members for information.

The day after she died, Newtown High School science teacher Trent Harrison remembered working with Ms Hochsprung for a number of years at Rogers Park Middle School in Danbury. "I learned so much from her," he said. "It was all about the kids."

Ms Hochsprung often held or started events for the students at the school. One Friday in November when she donned an old wedding dress, purchased by her mother from a consignment shop and tweaked to shine by Sandy Hook School PTA members, and brought the Book Fairy to life to greet students as they entered the school. With a "magic wand" Ms Hochsprung made her way from classroom to classroom, sprinkling fairy dust on children and bestowing the gift of time for a Reading Recess later that day.

Sandy Hook School Principal Dawn Hochsprung smiled during an interview near the end of June 2010, after being named as the new principal for the school.
—Bee file photo

As the principal she also made sure to be outside waiting to greet students for their first day of school and to wish them farewell on their the last. On August 24, she was also there to greet kindergarteners when they reached the school after riding on the bus for the first time, during a special day set aside for kindergarten bus runs.

Running Toward Danger

Mary Sherlach was nearing retirement, but when danger walked into Sandy Hook School, she and Ms Hochsprung moved toward it, protecting uncounted others. Superintendent of Schools Janet Robinson said Ms Sherlach and Ms Hochsprung ran toward the shooter, losing their own lives rushing toward him.

By every account, Ms Sherlach loved her job, and relished helping children overcome problems. In a news conference on Friday, Ms Sherlach's son-in-law, Eric Schwartz, told the *South Jersey Times* she had planned to leave work early that day.

"Mary felt like she was doing God's work," said Mr Schwartz, "working with the children."

Ms Gasparine said Mary Sherlach was an outstanding school psychologist.

"She dedicated herself to the students of Sandy Hook School, always looking out for their best interests, providing comfort and support," said Ms Gasparine. "She could be counted on to assist in difficult situations, providing guidance, wisdom, and counsel. She will be sorely missed by the entire Newtown community."

According to reports from friends and relatives of Victoria Soto, 27, a first grade teacher at Sandy Hook School, she loved what she did, and they were not surprised to learn she protected her students as her last act.

While details of Ms Soto's death are not clear, reports say she hid her students wherever she could in her classroom, and when the shooter walked in, she told him they were elsewhere. Ms Soto lost her life, protecting her students.

Her students were all Ms Soto talked about, according to one friend, and she always wanted to do her best for them.

Authorities say Anne Marie Murphy, 52, a teacher's aide at Sandy Hook School, was also a hero on Friday. Ms Murphy was a mother, wife, and daughter who was witty and hardworking. Her parents told *Newsday* that when authorities called to inform them of Ms Murphy's passing, they said their daughter, who is described as a happy and fun-loving soul, helped to shield her students from a rain of bullets.

Friends of Rachel Davino, 29, a teacher's aide at the school, said on Twitter following the Friday attack that her life was taken far too soon. According to some reports, Ms Davino, along with Ms Murphy, also protected students from the shooter.

Lauren Gabrielle Rousseau, 30, became a full-time teacher at Sandy Hook School in the fall, after years of being a substitute teacher.

In a statement released on Saturday, her mother Teresa Rousseau, a copy editor at the Danbury *News-Times*, said, "Lauren wanted to be a teacher from before she even went to kindergarten. We will miss her terribly and will take comfort knowing that she had achieved that dream."

Her mother told the paper, her daughter's time at Sandy Hook School was the best year of her life.

Most of the student victims from Friday — Charlotte Bacon, Daniel Barden, Olivia Engel, Josephine Gay, Ana M. Marquez-Greene, Dylan Hockley, Madeleine F. Hsu, Catherine V. Hubbard, Chase Kowalski, Jesse Lewis, James Mattioli, Grace McDonnell, Emilie Parker, Jack Pinto, Noah Pozner, Caroline Previdi, Jessica Rekos, Avielle Richman, Benjamin Wheeler, and Allison N. Wyatt — are familiar from their photos submitted for *The Bee's* Birthday Cake drawing, answering one or more of *The Bee's* weekly Bee Lines questions, or from pausing to have their photos taken during school events, like the Sandy Hook School breakfast held on Monday, November 12, for students and invited veterans and servicemen.

The school is a place where its motto—Think you can, work hard, get smart, be kind, have fun— is known by heart, and where its school song, written by music teacher Maryrose Kristopik and custodian Andy Spencer, is sung by the school community with exuberance and clapping hands.

The school mission was adopted in 2008 and reads, "Sandy Hook School sets a standard of excellence for all members of the school community. We are committed to building lifelong learners, capable of responding to the changing needs and demands of our world. Cultivating academics and aesthetics in mutually supportive ways, our students develop the skills, attitudes, and abilities needed to live healthy, productive, and successful lives. To this end, we actively engage students in a caring and collaborative learning environment dedicated to continuous improvement."

Sandy Hook School is a place that CARES (Cooperation, Assertion, Responsibility, Empathy, and Self-control). The CARES model was started at the school 12 years ago, and, as Ms Hochsprung and Sandy Hook School lead teacher Natalie Hammond explained in the first week of the 2012-13 academic year, it was in place the first moment students stepped off their buses this school year.

From the way teachers greet students to classroom practices, Ms Hochsprung and Ms Hammond explained, students are reminded about the CARES model, and that helps to create a positive community environment.

"The thing that makes it work so well is that every adult in the building believes in it," Ms Hochsprung said.

In one of her first interviews after the shooting, Dr Robinson told NBC, Friday's events shattered the sense of security the community feels.

Dr Robinson also echoed the sentiments of many, including the adults murdered on Friday at Sandy Hook School, when she told the reporter, "It is about the kids… and it is about the adults."

Dr Robinson also promised the district would try to get back to normal as soon as possible.

(The Associated Press contributed to this story.)

Sandy Hook School Principal Dawn Hochsprung, center, greeted kindergarten students as they arrived on Friday, August 24, after being picked up by their buses for a pre-run experience. Kindergarten bus runs were held in advance of the school year's start at each of the elementary schools.

A Book Fairy, brought to life by Ms Hochsprung, greeted students at the school on Friday, November 9, to thank them for reading.

Ms Hochsprung held a sign for the 2010-11 year's One School One Read book, The Lemonade War by Jacqueline Davies, on Friday, October 1, 2010, with fourth grade teacher Meg Horn's class, after the class provided a skit to kick off the month-long reading event.
—Bee file photos

Monroe's Chalk Hill School To Open For Sandy Hook Students

By Eliza Hallabeck

First Selectman Pat Llodra announced Sunday morning that through talks with Monroe officials, the town's mothballed Chalk Hill Middle School will be opened for use by Sandy Hook Elementary School students and educators.

By Saturday evening it was announced Newtown public schools and St Rose of Lima School will be closed on Monday. Schools, except Sandy Hook School, will reopen at regular times on Tuesday, December 18.

In an e-mail sent out to the school community Sunday morning, the Board of Education and Superintendent of Schools Janet Robinson announced, "We have been working to find a new home for our Sandy Hook School community. The Town of Monroe has graciously offered their Chalk Hill School. This facility, which is currently not being used, is in excellent condition and will accommodate all of the Sandy Hill School students and staff. It is located just across the border from Newtown and should be ready for occupancy in just a few days.

"Our staff is currently working to prepare the building and for the process of resuming classes. We will be able to publish the exact schedule shortly.

"We want to thank Monroe for helping us in this hour of need, not only by loaning this facility but also helping us prepare the building. We also want to thank the Governor's office and other state departments and his staff who has expedited the approvals for this move,

"… We will be publishing the date for the opening of Sandy Hook at Chalk Hill shortly."

In the e-mail, Dr Robinson also thanked everyone for displaying patience and support.

Monroe Superintendent of Schools Jim Agostine and the town's administrative team also published an announcement on the news on the Monroe Public Schools website, www.monroeps.org.

That announcement included, "We have been working with our First Selectman Steve Vavrek and representation from Newtown. Newtown will be using Chalk Hill School beginning this week. It is important that the Sandy Hook students get back to school quickly in an environment that is familiar and safe. We recognize that everyone would like to lend a helping hand, but we have been asked to hold back until the Newtown staff is settled in and they can direct our efforts.

"SchoolMessenger emails and our website, www.monroeps.org, has information that will provide you with guidance on speaking to your children about violence."

Newtown Savings Bank, United Way Partner To Create Support Fund

In order to provide support services to the families and community of Newtown, in light of the tragedy at Sandy Hook School, Friday, December 14, United Way of Western Connecticut in partnership with Newtown Savings Bank branch location. Branches of Newtown Savings Bank are located at 39 Main Street, Newtown; 228 South Main Street (Sand Hill Plaza), Newtown; 68 Stony Hill Road (Route 6), Bethel; 211 Greenwood

Healing Hearts Center Offers Assistance To Newtown Families

Responding to the need in Newtown following the tragedy at Sandy Hook School, December 14, Regional Hospice and Home Care of Western Connecticut has offered the support of its Healing Hearts Center for Grieving Children and Families in Danbury.

Healing Hearts provides grief and bereavement support for children and families who have suffered the loss of a loved one. While not a mental health center, Healing Hearts social workers are specialists in bereavement counseling and support groups, all of which are provided free to the public. Healing Hearts Center is at 73 Stadley Rough Road, in Danbury.

"We offer our deepest condolences to those who have lost a loved one. We will work together with Newtown school officials so families know that our center and staff will be available for those who need grief support in the future," said Cynthia Roy-Squitieri, also a licensed clinical social worker and CEO of Regional Hospice and

Sports Community Coping With Loss Of Teammates, Friends

By Andy Hutchison

There are those "heart-breaking" losses in sports that make coaches and athletes upset, but members of the local — and national — sports community are dealing with what are truly heart-breaking losses in the aftermath of the Sandy Hook Elementary School shootings and killings of December 14.

Myra Leuci is a board member of the Newtown Youth Wrestling Association (NYWA). Leuci has a 9-year-old son and Head O' Meadow School student, Steven, who wrestles in the program and lost a teammate, first-grader Jack Pinto.

Leuci, whose son is a fourth grader on the elementary wrestling squad, said children didn't want to talk much about the horrific incident in the day that followed. "I think a lot of kids are coping with it that way," she said.

Leuci said there was an initial sense of relief that her children were okay, but then quickly began to think about the families that lost loved ones. "That's when the grief hits you," Leuci said. "I love my community. I hate seeing Newtown associated with anything like this."

Jack Pinto was an up and coming grappler in town who earned a medal in the New Milford Kickoff Classic tournament a week ago. "He was new to the program and obviously doing very well," Leuci said.

"I'm numb. I hadn't slept all night. I

mother who teaches in the school.

Shpunt said the youth basketball program's games were canceled this weekend and that he had three travel games scheduled against New Milford, New Canaan, and Orange, and that coaches from all of those teams reached out to him to cancel the games before Shpunt called them. He added that youth league directors in town were slated to meet this past weekend to go over ideas to honor the victims of the shootings.

"You say it can't happen here, but it can happen anywhere," Shpunt said. Also a football coach, Shpunt has guided young athletes in town since back in 1969. He's seen players lose battles with cancer, among other unfortunate circumstances, but that nothing compares to this.

"It's just unbelievable. This is something that they're going to carry with them for the rest of their lives," Shpunt said.

Newtown High School, and schools in surrounding and nearby towns, postponed games on Friday, and some local communities canceled all athletic activities for the weekend. The Second Company Governor's Horse Guard postponed its December 16 awards and brunch event.

The National Football League announced that teams would hold moments of silence in memory of the shooting victims at this past weekend's games. Washington Redskins quarter-

The following statement was issued by the Connecticut Interscholastic Athletic Conference on its website, casciac.org: "The Connecticut Association of Schools is deeply saddened by the tragic events that occurred at Sandy Hook Elementary School. We offer our deepest sympathies to the families of the victims and are keeping the entire Newtown community in our thoughts and prayers."

Below the statement is a list of resources that may be of help to school leaders, including advice from the National Association of School Psychologists and American Red Cross.

Counseling For Community Members Available

Members of the Yale New Haven Hospital Crisis Intervention team and Crisis Intervention counselors from Danbury Hospital, as well as mental health clinicians from the State of Connecticut, are available for counseling to residents of Newtown/Sandy Hook, of all ages, not directly affected by the shootings at Sandy Hook School, Friday, December 14. Alternate counseling has been arranged for victim's families. Counselors will be at Edmond Town Hall as of Monday, according to a spokesperson in the office of the Newtown First Selectman.

Savings Bank has created the Sandy Hook School Support Fund.

Check donations to underwrite support services, immediate needs, and funeral expenses for the immediate families of victims can be mailed to:

Sandy Hook School Support Fund
c/o Newtown Savings Bank
39 Main Street, Newtown CT 06470

Donations may also be dropped off, beginning Monday, December 17, at any Newtown Avenue, Bethel; 99 Federal Road, Brookfield; 30 Main Street, Danbury; 535 Monroe Turnpike, Monroe; 477 Main Street (Route 25), Monroe; 194 Leavenworth Road, Shelton; 815 Bridgeport Avenue, Shelton; 1450 Southford Road, Southbury; 685 Main Street South, Southbury; and 926 White Plains Road, Trumbull.

Credit card donations may be made at https://newtown.uwwesternct.org.

For more information, call 800-461-0672.

Home Care, in an e-mail sent to *The Newtown Bee*. "Nothing can erase the horror or ever heal the hearts that have been broken on this day as the entire country mourns for these families. All we can do is be here with doors open and offer our experience providing support and comfort that may help these families move forward one minute at a time."

For more information call 203-702-7400 or 203-792-4422.

haven't eaten all day. It's just devastating," said Jack Shpunt, who runs the Newtown Youth Basketball Association's in-house program and coaches second-, third-, and fourth-grade boys in town.

"I know a bunch of my kids were in the building," said Shpunt, adding that among them was the younger brother of one of his team members, who was among those who escaped and ran from the school. Another team member has a

back Robert Griffin III had a tweet that was posted on the NFL website that read: "I may not be a parent, but I cannot begin to imagine how it feels to have my child's life taken away. And no one ever should."

"My heart breaks for the families of those killed in Newtown, Conn. It is so senseless. I am angry, disgusted, but most of all extremely sad," tweeted New Orleans Saints quarterback Drew Brees.

Beginning Monday, December 17, Kids in Crisis will be at Newtown Youth & Family Services, 15 Berkshire Road, Sandy Hook, to provide free emotional and therapeutic support for parents, students, and school staff. Numerous professionals, including psychologists, psychiatrists, and clinicians, will be available throughout the week, from 9 am to 8 pm, Monday through Thursday, and from 9 am to 5 pm on Friday. For more information call 203-426-8103.

Paramedics and law enforcement personnel approach the school building on Dickenson Drive. —Bee Photo, Hicks

Two adults and a student were among the first to exit the school building, along with a state trooper, following the shootings. —Bee Photo, Hicks

An armed state trooper runs toward Sandy Hook School on Friday, December 14, on a report of multiple shots fired within the elementary school building. —Bee Photo, Hicks

Town Grieves Following Mass Murder At Sandy Hook Elementary School

Parents waited anxiously in Sandy Hook School's parking lot Friday morning, waiting for any word on their children inside. —Bee Photo, Hicks

First responders and law enforcement personnel from across the region poured into Sandy Hook on Friday morning. —Bee Photo, Hicks

After spending time with the families of the victims of the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting, First Selectman Pat Llodra waits at Treadwell Park to make a statement to the press assembled there. —Bee Photo, Bobowick

(continued from page S-1)

ed that Nancy Lanza was the victim of a homicide due to multiple gunshot wounds.

An autopsy showed that Adam Lanza committed suicide by gunfire.

Lt Vance declined to disclose a timeline in connection with the shooting deaths.

Adam Lanza mostly used a Bushmaster AR-15-type assault rifle in the shootings at the school, Lt Vance said. Lanza also had a Glock 10-mm pistol and a Sig Sauer 9-mm pistol. Lanza carried high-capacity ammunition magazines with those weapons. Also, a shotgun was found in the vehicle that Lanza drove to the school, Lt Vance said.

The lieutenant said Sunday that investigators will be analyzing a computer for forensic evidence in connection with the multiple deaths.

An Unspeakable And Tragic Event

At a Friday news briefing, Governor Dannel Malloy said that he is grateful to people from around the world who have expressed their condolences to him over the shooting deaths.

The governor termed the incident "an unspeakable and tragic event."

"Evil visited this community today," Gov Malloy said, adding, "We'll do whatever we can to overcome this event.

"Our prayers have to go out to the families," Gov Malloy said.

As he spoke while surrounded by local, state, and federal officials, several news helicopters flew over Treadwell Park. About 200 members of the press representing news organizations from across the world attended.

Lt Vance described the school as "a very, very difficult scene for the family members and the first responders" who initially went to the incident. "This was a very tragic horrific [crime] scene," he said.

Newtown Police Lieutenant George Sinko said of the incident, "It was most definitely the worst thing we have experienced in Newtown. It was tragic."

Lanza Family Portrait Is Both Normal And Not

By John Voket

Those who knew her, either as neighborhood friends or individuals who worked at her Yogananda Street home, describe the mother and first victim of Sandy Hook School shooter Adam Lanza as a warm, caring parent and one who welcomed service workers like landscapers and painters with a smile and kind sentiments.

Dan Holmes of Holmes Fine Gardens, a local landscape design firm, worked at Nancy Lanza's residence — sometimes on a weekly basis — over the course of several years.

"As recently as my last visit on December 7, Nancy expressed her appreciation to me for the work we did helping to decorate her house," Mr Holmes said. "Although I don't recall ever seeing either of her sons, she spoke about them often."

He said Nancy Lanza was meticulous in her dress and demeanor, expressed herself clearly but was not demanding in her requests. And while she talked about her sons as high achievers in school, Mr Holmes said he had the impression she was much more directly involved with her older son Ryan, than into her garage to show off an expensive new rifle she had just received, and that she previously talked about growing up on a farm and being exposed to and developing an affinity for target shooting in her younger years.

"She was not a hunter," he said. "But she grew up on a farm in New Hampshire, so she was used to handling firearms. She showed me that beautiful, new rifle, and I thought she was looking forward to doing some target shooting with it.

"She struck me as a very responsible gun owner," Mr Holmes added.

It is possible, however, that there was a period of time between her childhood and her acquaintance with Mr Holmes that Nancy Lanza was not as interested in firearms. Alex Israel, a former neighbor of the Lanzas and classmate of Adam, told *The Bee* that she "never once heard a thing about the family visiting a shooting range or being involved with guns by any means. I was surprised to hear that in the news."

She said Nancy Lanza "was always nice to me, she was a kind, typical suburban mom as far as I remember. I ran into her in the supermarket every now and then and she always asked how I was doing."

Another local individual who asked not to be named, who did work frequently at the Lanza home, said he never saw or was shown any rifles when he was on the premises.

"I know she liked guns and she had a permit to carry one," he said. "But she grew up on a farm with guns."

The individual said he considered Nancy Lanza a friend, and that she was a welcoming and soft spoken individual — a good mom who loved her kids very much.

"I was there a lot and I never heard or saw any signs of fighting, never heard yelling or screaming," he said. "As far as Adam was concerned, he was just a shy little kid. That's why what happened is so hard to believe."

Even as he grew into a high schooler, the workman said Adam was exactly like many of the other teenagers at other homes where he worked.

"I had limited interaction with Adam. He stayed to himself, worked in his room on computers — a typical young person like all the other kids his age that I know," the workman said. "There was his mother."

At the same time, the individual said he knows many of Adam Lanza's victims. With his voice cracking, the workman said, "I played with these kids, their parents came to the funeral when [one of my parents] died."

Nancy Lanza also attended that funeral.

"She reached out to comfort me after my [parent's] passing, and before [the] death, she always asked how everything was going," he added. "That's why going to Nancy's was one of my favorite places to work. She was very sweet."

Something Was Off

Ms Israel said going back to her and Adam Lanza's elementary school years, she lived a few houses down, rode the bus with him, and wanted to be his friend.

"We had a couple play dates. He was always different — keeping to himself, fidgeting and very quiet," she told *The Bee*. "I could always tell he was a super smart kid, maybe just socially awkward, but something was off about him."

As time went on, she said Adam continued to keep to himself.

"I branched out more, so [there was] not much contact

briefcase he carried, but I never had a class with him and never saw him with friends," she said. "I do know he was involved in the technology club at school. I was yearbook editor and I remember he declined to be photographed or give us a senior quote or baby picture. Otherwise I can't say much else about him."

Regarding the shootings at Sandy Hook Elementary School, however, Ms Israel, like the community, is still in a state of shock.

"It's such a devastating tragedy for our close-knit community, something you'd never think would happen where you live, where you've grown up safely and soundly your whole life," she said. "The teachers, students, police and responders are all heroes for what they've done, as are those who have died."

She said it is hard to think about how this will affect her town, but harder to think about how it will affect the people most directly involved who have lost daughters, sons, siblings, friends, and family.

"That something like this could be done by a human at all, let alone to innocent babies and people who devote

Adam.

"I remember her telling me about an upcoming trip to New Orleans to go see Trombone Shorty, and that she was taking her older son," Mr Holmes said. "But her younger son wanted to stay home."

He also recalled the day when Nancy Lanza called him

A Ridgefield police officer, who was aiding Newtown police, directs a motorist away from Yogananda Street on Sunday morning. A section of that street in Sandy Hook was closed to through-traffic as police investigators conducted a crime scene investigation at the Lanza residence at 36 Yogananda Street in connection with the shooting deaths of 28 people on Friday. The house seen in the background is not the crime scene.
—Bee Photo, Gorosko

never an inkling of violent tendencies.

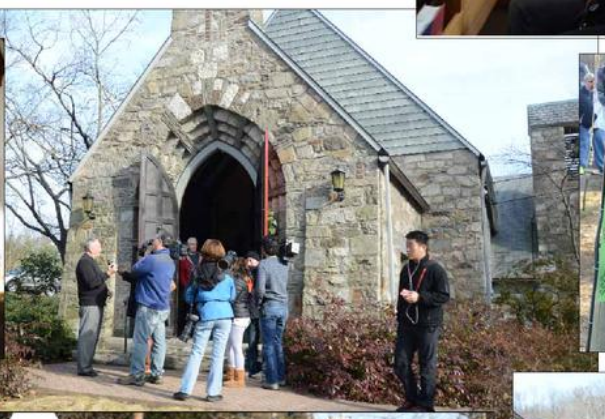
"Even before Ryan [Lanza] went away to school, neither one of them cared about me being around and doing what I had to do," he added. "This is really hard for me. Everyone still needs to remember there is another young man here who has lost his brother and

with him after middle school. Anytime I saw him on the bus, in the halls, at the cafeteria he was alone," Ms Israel said. "I don't know if he had any close friends."

By the time high school came around, she said Adam "sort of disappeared."

"I'd see him in the halls walking quickly with his

their lives to helping and teaching them, is a tragedy and a horror that will never be forgotten," Ms Israel said. "I think a lot of people are still in disbelief, and will be for a while. All I want to do is come home, hug my family, and do my best to support my strong community in this difficult time."



The Healing Begins Throughout The Town

By Kendra Bobowick

Newtown forever changed Friday morning, December 14, but by the next day, townspeople had begun the hard work of recovery by gathering together and showing signs of support for their community.

"Please pray for Newtown," said a handwritten sign on the front window of Sabrina Style on Washington Avenue, and in another window: "God bless Sandy Hook." Crowding the streets and sidewalks were residents reaching for one another, embracing, grieving, and stopping at the many handmade vigils and signs going up.

Store owner Irene Caulfield arranged bunches of flowers on a bench, then reached up to tape a message written by her daughter Katy, 22, which said, "Sometimes we find ourselves so busy that we forget to say goodbye to our loved ones before we leave for work … sometimes we forget to take a few minutes out of our day to give affection to our dog or send a birthday text.

"However, when we are confronted with a tragedy of this magnitude so close to home it makes us stop in our tracks. We automatically call our friends and families, give a hug and kiss and tell someone we love them."

She wrote that we all need to slow down our lives and take time to appreciate our loved ones, "each and every moment. Life is short, fragile, if you don't do it now, you may never get another chance."

"It's so beautiful," Ms Caulfield said.

Propped on the curb outside Sandy Hook Wine & Liquor was a large, handmade Flag of Honor, remembering those killed, "Now and forever." In small type the sign said, "It will represent their immortality. We shall never forget them."

A few feet away were college seniors and residents David Quinn and J.R. Shine. Wearing Santa hats, they put out a collection bucket to gather funds to support the families.

Standing with a sign of his own across the intersection was Groton resident Gabriel Bevan, who knows no one in town, but who signed by The Apex Glass Family.

Visible beyond the sign and clogging the road into Sandy Hook Center was a stream of out-of-town news media, mixing in with mourners carrying flowers, stuffed animals, balloons, and small signs of their own. Many placed these small children's gifts at the base of the Sandy Hook Elementary School sign on Riverside Road. Next door at the Sandy Hook Volunteer Fire & Rescue Company garage, company members grabbed 26 evergreen trees that are on the lot for sale for Christmas, propped them in stands, and lined them up on the corner. Soon, busy hands worked to adorn those trees with teddy bears and Christmas decorations. Across the street from the firehouse, as with Sandy Hook Center, was a sea of broadcast media.

Crowding those residents who were out Saturday to grieve and find comfort in their neighbors was the media swarm representing television stations around the world. Their crews had descended on this small community seeking live footage.

Inside St John's Church during a service meant for prayer and healing at noon Saturday, the media loomed.

With her cheeks stained with tears, Sandy Hook resident Mary Fellows told the crush of cameras and reporters, "The kids seem quiet and disconnected. That's not okay."

She said, "It's about change and that has to start now." Crying, she said, "Put your cameras down and take it in." Making a point that was on many minds in the shooting's aftermath, she said, "Everybody [in the community] is connected somehow. I went to Sandy Hook School. My daughter went to Sandy Hook School … let the change start. Let's change today. Today."

On the streets people wept openly. People embraced or held hands. On everyone's lips was the question, "Are you okay?"

As churches continued a series of services that began Friday night, residents gathered, many lit candles or set up memorial trees soon surrounded by flowers and other gifts left as a vigil for the many children and adults the town lost last week.

offered his own support. His sign said, "Our thoughts and prayers are with you ... may the Lord and His angels wrap His arms around you and provide you with comfort."

Spray painted on a sheet hung outside the Stone River Grille was the message, "Hug a Teacher Today." Another sign hung nearby read "God Bless Sandy Hook."

On Riverside Road hung on the Apex Glass Sign was another note: "We Love the teachers and children of Sandy Hook,"

A Landmark Honors The Victims

Within hours of 20 children and six adults being shot and killed inside Sandy Hook School, President Obama ordered flags across the United States lowered "as a mark of respect for the victims of the senseless acts of violence perpetrated on December 14, 2012, in Newtown, Connecticut." Firefighters from Hook & Ladder lowered the flag of Newtown's Main Street flagpole to half-staff by 4 pm. The President's proclamation orders American flags to remain lowered until sunset, December 18. —Bee Photo, Hicks

Media Converges On Newtown From All Corners Of The Globe

By John Voket

The rows and rows of news vans and satellite trucks stationed at Treadwell Park and at many other areas around town may be identifiable by logos tying them to their media of origin. But many members of the international press corps are also either on location or calling in to sources, including *The Newtown Bee*, to begin to form a picture of this relatively small and tightly-knit community to readers and viewers in their country of origin.

At the first press conference at Treadwell Park the morning after an unimaginable series of tragic events played out at Sandy Hook School, there were already reporters on scene bearing credentials from media outlets in Asia, Eastern Europe, Scandinavia, Mexico, South America, and, of course, the UK and Canada.

It appears that many of those foreign press liaisons arriving in the hours following the shooting were stationed at affiliates in New York, Boston, and Washington, D.C., a veritable quick jaunt versus those who may have been flown in from destinations half or more a world away.

Even a short walk past the pop-up tents and camera stations in the Treadwell parking area filming their anchors and reporters Saturday morning revealed many foreign languages being spoken.

In addition, reporters from England, Germany, Canada, and Denmark visited *The Bee* to either speak with staff, or to request resources, photos, or any shred of information that could better assist them in painting an accurate picture of the Newtown community.

Some of those contacting the town's only local newspaper by phone have expressed sympathy, and have sent prayers and thoughts to the thousands who live here who were not directly involved in Friday's tragedy, but who will nonetheless be among the immediate collateral victims scarred for life by their association to what is being called the second worst school shooting in United States history.

From Canada to England to Australia, news outlets that have been granted interviews by *Bee* staffers seem more intent in engaging in conversations about gun control and the white hot political controversy this latest, senseless massacre has inspired, while domestic news reporters from Detroit, Atlanta, Oklahoma, and California have steered their questioning more along the lines of how the emergency response played out in the immediate moments and hours following the bone-chilling local dispatch that reported shots fired at Sandy Hook Elementary School.

But virtually every interviewer, from every outlet, is stymied by the same questions undoubtedly on the mind of every Newtowner: What led Adam Lanza to murder his own mother in the home they shared on Yogananda Street, and then to drive to Sandy Hook School, smash his way into the lobby and to take 26 more innocent lives?

Stories Of Heroism Emerge From School Shooting Tragedy

By John Voket

As parents and loved ones of victims continued arriving at the Sandy Hook Fire Headquarters to hear the incomprehensible news about the loss of children or colleagues, stories began emerging of staff members who heroically snapped into action to try and protect the many students and co-workers who survived what is now being called the worst school shooting in United States history.

There was the school custodian, bleary-eyed and shaking off expressions of thanks and praise, who as shots were ringing out reportedly ran through the school halls making sure classroom doors were locked from the inside.

And the school nurse who fought the urge to run to help, instead following the protocol and training she received never thinking she would have to use it. That adherence to her training likely saved her life.

Moments after taking cover under her desk per her training protocol, she said saw the boots of the gunman as he entered her office. The individual stood there for a few moments and then moved on down the hallway firing more shots.

There were the library staffers who heard commotion on the school's public address system and learned there was a gunman in the building. After rushing a number of students into a storage closet and barricading it with file cabinets, they initially would not even open the door for police who were standing outside until they were called by emergency operators and convinced it was safe to exit with the children.

And two cafeteria workers who heard shots and dropped to the ground, crawling into a utility closet and locking themselves in until help arrived.

But none were more tragic than the accounts of Principal Dawn Hochsprung, who was emerging from a meeting and apparently saw the gunman and warned several colleagues who were about to step into the hallway behind her, and into the shooter's direct line of fire.

The last thing one witness recalled was her turning back and yelling a warning to lock the door as she apparently confronted the gunman. A few moments later she was shot.

At one point an unidentified woman wearing a Connecticut State Police jacket addressed the group of teachers and staff who were consoling each other in the empty Sandy Hook apparatus bays. She complimenting all of them on their individual and "exemplary" efforts following the procedures they were taught to ensure the protection of as many children and colleagues as possible.

During the coming days as Newtown attempts to try and come to grips with this monumental tragedy, more of these stories will surely surface.

But these initial reports reinforce the fact that Sandy Hook School staffers successfully used the training they received if such an unthinkable incident ever occurred, along with their instincts and knowledge of the facility, to protect themselves, their colleagues, and, most importantly, the children who were under their care to the best of their ability.

Parents Stress Safe Environment In Explaining The Inexplicable

By Nancy K. Crevier

As families of the Sandy Hook School community, and the grieving parents of 20 children and families of six staff members killed in the siege by a lone shooter on Sandy Hook School, Friday, December 14, grappled with those untimely deaths, parents all over the Newtown/Sandy Hook community faced challenges in helping their children understand the tragedy. How, they asked each other, does one explain the unexplainable?

Trent Harrison is a science teacher at Newtown High School, where he was under lockdown with his students during the assault on Sandy Hook School, barely more than a mile away. He is also the parent of two young children who attend Newtown schools. And he is a Newtown Parks and Recreation soccer coach, with many players from the Sandy Hook section of town.

Like so many families in the community, he and his wife, Cynthia, have struggled to strike a balance between normalcy and keeping their two young children informed about the tragedy that took the lives of children and teachers at the elementary school.

"Middle Gate School staff did an amazing job of keeping the children safe," said Mr Harrison. "They left it to the parents' timelines to tell [the children]," he said.

The Harrisons and Mr Harrison's mother got Morgan, 6, and Tyler, 9, together in a comfortable situation after school, and then told them the truth, in simple terms.

"We didn't give details, just that something bad had happened," he said. Most importantly, said Mr Harrison, the adults emphasized to the children that they were safe.

Because both of the children are involved in a by Middle Gate administrators.

"It was wonderful that the children at Middle Gate did not know anything all day. They kept them safe, but left it all to unfold at home," said the mother of 9-year-old Erica. Nicole and Richard Friedrich also have a 16-year-old daughter, Jenna, at Newtown High School.

Something Was Not Right

Their youngest was aware something seemed not right when she got off the bus on Friday, but the Friedrichs had already discussed what would be appropriate to tell her. "We let her know something had happened in town that was sad, but we kept it short," said Ms Friedrich. Like the Harrisons, they told her the truth and stressed that she was safe and did not have to worry.

"She seemed to process it quietly for a few hours, then asked us some questions, simple things. We just kept wanting her to know she was okay," said Ms Friedrich. The Friedrichs also decided to disallow television and media in order to protect their youngest.

"With Jenna, it was different," said Ms Friedrich, noting that a teenager is more on the level of an adult. Her high schooler had many questions.

"She called me to come get her as soon as they were released from lockdown. She felt very unsafe," she said. Comforting a teenager is different from what is offered to younger children. Teenagers need "pure honesty. They don't need anything muted down," she said. There is more of a need to be together with the community, and of course, said Ms Friedrich, they are much more aware of the finality of death.

"Even though this is a horrible tragedy," Ms Friedrich said, "I believe we will all come out with

Stuffed animals filled the space below the

"I am going to be contacting all of their parents today," said Ms Holmes, Sunday, December 16, "so I don't go in unprepared."

She has also decided, after she and her husband, Dan, discussed with their three children what had happened on Friday, to seek professional counseling for all of her own children. She had hoped to keep them away from newscasts, she said, but, "You know teenagers. Social networking is so important to them. They were texting with their friends and that's how kids get their news these days."

It's Important To Talk

"This is an unimaginable, horrible thing [our kids] have to process. I think that it is important for them to talk to someone," said Ms Holmes.

Reading, talking to others, and trying to figure out the best way to present the situation in Newtown to their 3-year-old son, Simon, and particularly to their 6-year-old son, Oliver, occupied a great deal of Diana and Greg Pategas's time since Friday. Oliver, a Middle Gate student, was unaware as of Saturday that anything out of the usual was occurring, said his father. Their children are at that in-between stage, said Mr Pategas, when they are still "not really aware of mortality."

Saturday was consumed with normal preholiday activities, like trimming the Christmas tree, focusing on an upcoming visit from the boys' grandmother, and even a birthday party, he said.

But because Oliver was in contact with friends at the birthday party who talked about "losing friends," said Ms Pategas, they planned to address the tragedy by the end of Saturday.

"We will tell them something terrible happened in our town, and explain in simple terms. I don't think it's fair to [Oliver] to put him in a situation, blind, about what other kids are talking about," said Ms Lundstrom. She is doing her best to reassure her daughter as the weekend progresses, she said, but her eldest is feeling uncomfortable about returning to school, where she hid with classmates and her instructor beneath desks in the culinary department on Friday.

Summer, a Reed Intermediate School student, was not fully aware of what had happened when Ms Lundstrom picked her up from school on Friday. She has asked questions, but has been mostly quiet, "As if she is letting it wash away," said her mother.

She and her husband, Jeff, have made a point of paying a little extra attention to Brooke and Summer since Friday. "Summer's attention, especially, seems heightened to our feelings," said Ms Lundstrom, so they have also emphasized going forward with plans in place before Friday's shooting at Sandy Hook School.

Having A Normal Day

"We have tried to make sure that they had a normal day. As a parent," she said, "you have to be strong for your children. I think questions will come as time goes on, and Jeff and I will be here to answer them."

For Newtown residents of all ages, comfort arrived in town in the form of thousands of stuffed animals from anonymous donors, delivered to area churches. As Reverend Matthew Crebbin told those gathered at the Sunday morning service at Newtown Congregational Church, where mounds of teddy bears were piled in the narthex and great room, "They are for anyone. If you need something soft and fuzzy, please, take one. Pass it on, or keep it if you need comfort today."

Professional counselors were on hand at Reed

variety of townwide clubs and organizations, both Morgan and Tyler were concerned about playmates they might know. After answering a few questions as best they could, the Harrisons spent the rest of the weekend trying to keep Morgan and Tyler busy with normal plans. They would continue to address questions from the children as they arose, said Mr Harrison, but most importantly, they would continue to emphasize that there was no threat to them, and that they were safe.

Nicole Friedrich also praised the decisions made

something that will make us stronger, together. For now, we are telling our children that they are safe and that the community cares."

A kindergarten teacher in New Haven, Newtown resident Debbie Holmes is the mother of 12-year-old twins, Eli and Hannah, and a 16-year-old, Lily. This weekend, she was struggling not only with providing comfort to her own children, but wondering how aware her New Haven class would be of the situation in Newtown when she returned to work on Monday.

Christmas tree in the altar of Newtown Congregational Church on December 16, part of the church's annual collection of donations for children in hospitals. Additional stuffed animals arrived on the altar and spilled over its steps on Sunday, however, left by those who attended that morning's worship service and wanted to add to the collections being used during counseling for everyone affected by Friday morning's shootings.

—Bee Photo, Hicks

like Sunday School or school next week. You want to protect them, and part of protecting them is priming them for situations they will face in real time," said Ms Pategas.

"If it comes up," added Mr Pategas, "we'll talk about how people can get physically sick, and how sickness can be in their heads, too."

"The kids have gotten information about this event on social networks," said Debbie Lundstrom, the mother of 16-year-old Brooke and 10-year-old Summer. "Brooke's talking about it, and talking

Intermediate School all weekend for free support to residents of Newtown and Sandy Hook not directly impacted by the Sandy Hook School tragedy, and a spokesperson in the office of the first selectman said that those services would move to Edmond Town Hall on Monday.

Newtown Youth & Family Services will provide free counseling Monday through Thursday, December 17 through 20, from 9 am to 8 pm, and on Friday, December 21, from 9 am to 5 pm, for anyone in need. NYFS is located at 15 Berkshire Road.

Saturday, December 15, 2012–

Governor Malloy's Statement

Governor Dannel P. Malloy made the following statement Saturday, December 15, at a press conference at Treadwell Park in Sandy Hook:

"Yesterday an unspeakable tragedy occurred in the community of Newtown. Twenty beautiful children and seven wonderful adults lost their lives.

"All of Connecticut's people — indeed the people of the world — weep for the immeasurable losses suffered by the families and loved ones of these victims.

"Though we could all try, when something as senseless as this occurs, there's precious little anyone can say to the families of the victims that will lessen the horror and sense of loss they feel. We could say we feel their pain, but the truth is we can't.

"When tragedies like take place, people often look for answers, an explanation of how this could have occurred. But the sad truth is, there are no answers. No good ones, anyway.

"We have all seen tragedies like this play out in other states and countries. Each time, we wondered how something so horrific could occur, and we thanked God that it didn't happen here in Connecticut. But now it has.

"So what can we do? As was no doubt the case last night, we can hug someone we love a little tighter. As has been happening since yesterday, we can show and share with each other the grief we feel for the children and adults who were killed, and for their families and loved ones. We can speak about what's really important, and what can wait for another day.

"There will be time soon for a discussion of the public policy issues surrounding yesterday's events, but what's important right now is this: love, courage, and compassion.

"Love, as it has poured in from around the world.

"Courage, as was demonstrated by the teachers and other adults in the school building, whose actions no doubt saved lives.

"Courage on display, as it always is, by all our first responders.

"Compassion, as shown by people around Connecticut who've arrived in Newtown wanting only to help.

"Too often, we focus on what divides us as people, instead of what binds us as human beings. What we saw yesterday were those bonds, that sense of community.

"In the coming days, we will rely upon that which we have been taught and that which we inherently believe: that we have faith for a reason, and that faith is God's gift to all of us.

"Those educators, and those innocent little boys and girls were taken from their families far too soon. Let us all hope and pray those children are now in a place where that innocence will forever be protected.

"May God bless you, may God bless those 27 people, may God bless their families and friends, and may the pain their loved ones feel be someday absorbed by the love of mankind."

Governor Dannel P. Malloy spoke to the assembled press corps at Treadwell Park on Saturday, December 15. —Bee Photo, Bobowick

Situated Hard By Disaster, The Sandy Hook Firehouse Carries Out The Work Of The Living With Volunteers

By Shannon Hicks

Sandy Hook Fire's main station is overwhelmed.

People want to reach out to tell us that they are sorry for our town, for the children, the adults, the victims, of Friday's senseless act of violence, and so they are walking to the firehouse. Friends we know and strangers from places we have never been to have reached out to all of Newtown's first responders since Friday.

The firehouse is usually a place for laughter and bawdy jokes, of radios and/or TVs blaring in the back room, and myriad tasks going on in the front of the house. Trucks are checked, gear is cleaned, work sessions and meetings are part of the regular routine.

Not this weekend. It is busy, but hardly routine. There are local police officers, state troopers, and national security agents working side-by-side out of the utilitarian building that normally serves as headquarters for one of the town's five volunteer fire companies.

Black bunting hangs from one of the bay doors of the main station, and was also on the front of one of the engines for a while. An American flag and a Connecticut flag were erected from the back of that engine, which was pulled out into the parking lot on Saturday.

The Christmas decorations that were put into place recently feel out of place now, yet no one wants to remove them. The Christmas party for children of the company's members has been postponed one week, but it will go on.

"We still need to do that, for the children," we keep telling each other.

Meanwhile, reporters and cameramen and associated news crews from around the world are being kept across the street, lining the edge of lawns on Riverside Road. Cars and trucks are parked along both sides of Sunnyview Terrace, which runs perpendicular to the firehouse. The parking is reminiscent of LobsterFest weekend, when Sandy Hook is overrun with families and visitors of all ages. But of course this is not why all of those vehicles are out there.

Sandy Hook's firehouse is within walking distance of Sandy Hook Elementary School. The attack of Friday morning happened within our district, so the firehouse (the main station, anyway) has become a gathering point for many of the officials working to unravel what happened around 9:30 that cold, sunny morning.

Some of the first responders know people who lost their children, or were friends with the teachers who were killed. All of us know that these were people of this community, even those who lived outside Sandy Hook when they went home after work each day.

Chaplains from Billy Graham have been dispatched to the firehouse, along with certified counselors and members of the Department of Public Health, all to keep an eye out for anyone who wants or needs to talk. Not many do.

The memorial around the Sandy Hook School sign at the end of Dickenson Drive has been growing exponentially, by the hour.

There are flowers by the bouquet, potted, and single stems. There are candles. A large group of white balloons was among the first offerings attached to the signpost. Pink and light blue balloons, one Mylar balloon decorated with a fire truck and another with Nemo all arrived on Saturday, and of course there are green and white balloons, the colors of Sandy Hook School.

An evergreen wreath was hung from the front of the signpost at some point on Saturday, as was a pair of feathery angel wings. Person after person, of all ages, tentatively approaches the growing pile of offerings and added what they could to the tribute. Firefighters watch from the western corner of their parking lot, occasionally helping someone with a large item, other times approaching to peer at something that has been dropped off. On Saturday afternoon Firefighter Kyle Degenhardt used a staple gun to affix a large piece of green poster board that had been signed by members of an out-of-town church to a utility pole on the corner of the driveway.

Saturday morning the firehouse received a call from a woman in North Carolina. She wanted to do something to honor the victims. She had also heard about, or perhaps seen a sign in the background of one of the news reports announcing, the company's Christmas tree sale. She said she wanted to purchase 26 of those trees, one for each victim, and to put them out where people could decorate them.

What a beautiful gesture, in many ways. Of course it provides a location for people to focus some of their thoughts. For the firefighters — not just Sandy Hook, but brothers and sisters from Hook & Ladder, Stepney, Southbury and other neighboring companies who are standing by at 18-20 Riverside Road — it suddenly gave them something to do. Twenty-six tree stands needed to be located, and then put together and attached to the trees. And then manpower was needed to move the trees from the sales area to the small strip of land that runs between the station's parking lot and Dickenson Drive leading, of course, toward Sandy Hook School.

Ornaments and dolls began arriving immediately, even before word got out through media and social media sources.

One woman said she had driven more than 90 minutes to visit the school and pay her respects. She introduced herself as Miss Corrie, and asked what the trees were for, her eyes tearing up again. When she learned what they represented, she asked if she could move the teddy bears she had just placed by the school sign to the trees.

Two firefighters walked across the driveway, picked up those small soft stuffed animals, and walked along behind Miss Corrie as she carefully placed a teddy bear on each tree. She talked about "the babies," "the children, and the adults, and the senselessness of this." Tears streamed down her face, and she stopped to hug us at least once.

When she was finished putting those bears on the trees she asked to take a picture. One of the firefighters demurred, but the other one, who hates having her photo taken as much as I do, said, "Yes ma'am, we would be honored to do that for you."

We do what we can to help people whether at the scene of an emergency or long-term crisis.

The station phone rang steadily for most of the day. Many people were calling from all over the country, trying to find out what they could do to help us or to extend their sympathies to all of town.

A large percentage of the calls were from fellow firefighters, offering manpower, apparatus, a shoulder to lean on or an ear to listen. Their training, as ours, tells them that there will not be much that we can share with anyone else, but still, like everyone else, they just want to tell us that they are thinking of us.

And then there is the food.

People have been so generous, feeding us everything and anything they think will help sustain us. There have been countless plates, trays and containers delivered to the firehouse. Plates of cookies — clearly homemade that morning — sit next to catered desserts, packaged snacks, and bowls of fruit. Water and soda have been delivered, hot water for tea and cocoa is steady, and the coffee pot has been running steadily since Friday afternoon. The ladies auxiliary members have taken turns feeding everyone, whether inside the station or outdoors, whether firefighter, ambulance corps members, law official, chaplain, or extended family members who have joined us during this time of crisis.

It all helps.

(Associate Editor Shannon Hicks is a member of Sandy Hook Volunteer Fire & Rescue Company.)

An anonymous donor from North Carolina purchased 26 Christmas trees from Sandy Hook Fire & Rescue Co. Saturday morning, saying she wanted to do something to honor the victims of the December 14 shootings. Firefighters were to place the trees, she said, in a location where the public would be able to add anything they wanted to. Stuffed animals and ornaments began arriving almost immediately. By Sunday afternoon most of the trees had been relocated to the opposite corner, near the Sandy Hook School sign, which allowed visitors to place items on the trees themselves. —Bee Photo, Hicks

The Sandy Hook Firehouse provided refuge for the Sandy Hook Elementary School community and first responders. —Bee Photo, Voket

Two women visiting the growing memorial at the Sandy Hook School sign placed bouquets of flowers at the base of the sign Saturday afternoon. —Bee Photo, Bobowick

The Letter Hive

Support Pours Into Newtown From Around The World

To the Editor:
My family use to live in Sandy Hook up on near Lake Zoar.
My daughter attended Sandy Hook Elementary School back in the 1980s. I wanted to send everyone there my thoughts and prayers during this time. Please know that we are all praying for everyone in this time of need.
God Bless you all.
Lori Ann Caterson
4123 Dustin Drive, Acworth, Ga. December 14, 2012

To the Editor:
I am the owner of the Pony Patch and Don't Forget us....Pet US. We have a lot of small ponies, miniature donkeys, bunnies, goats etc, I am reaching out in response to this mornings shooting at the kindergarten. We want to offer our time, animals and efforts and anything we can do to help these poor children get through this experience. Please let the school know.
My number is 508-965-3226. Thank you so much. I am deeply saddened and my heart, thoughts and prayers go out to the so many this has affected.
Deb Bell
1 Oakridge Drive, North Dartmouth, Mass. December 14, 2012

To the Community of Newtown:
My deepest condolences to the victims and their families of the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting. It is an unthinkable tragedy; every parent's worst nightmare. I cannot understand how someone could do this. There is no reasoning, no meaning, but I know we are all searching for one anyway.
I cannot begin to understand the pain, the grief, and the horror your community is currently going through. But I want you to know, we are thinking about you, and praying for you.
God, may you be with the students, faculty, and community as they try to make sense of it. Be with them through the fear. But most of all, be with the families, friends, and parents of those who died in this senseless act. Be with them through the grief and horror, and help them through it all.
Holly Runyon
Mineral Wells, Texas December 14, 2012

To the Editor:
The hearts and prayers of all the people of Nova Scotia are with the families of the children and others hurt and killed in this mad act.
God bless you and may you somehow find comfort.
Jim Vibert
Braemount Drive, Halifax, Nova Scotia December 14, 2012

To the Editor:
After hearing of the horrific events of today, I feel the need to offer my condolences to all who have suffered loss today. My prayers are with all the families of the lost, as well as those who survived and will carry these burdens with them for years to come. Mere words cannot express nor replace the pain afflicted upon your town today. All I can do is express my sympathy and condolences to all.
William Knauert
Sylvan Lake, Alberta Canada December 14, 2012

To the Editor:
I would like to offer any help I may be able to give to help the community recover from such a tragedy. If there is anything a mother can do to help, let me know. I am located in Woonsocket, R.I., and would be able to help any family out to keep daily life moving through their recovery (cooking, cleaning, errands, etc).
I am not sure what else may be needed, but I know in times such as these, daily tasks seem to be too much. I am willing to stop what I am doing here and head down there if needed for a few days.
Please contact me if there is anything I can do.
My prayers are with everyone in Newtown.
Caitlin Roche
c_roche_85@yahoo.com
Woonsocket, R.I. December 14, 2012

To the Editor:
To *all* of you I am sorry...so very sorry.
Heaven is overflowing with angels today. God bless you.
Janis Lloyd
25525 Redwing Lane, Bush, La. December 14, 2012

To the Residents of Newtown:
I wanted to extend my support and concern for all of you today after this needless violence ruptured your tranquil town. As a parent, this would be my worst terror realized and my prayers, love and support are with all of you.
Nothing but God and love can give you strength. Whether you are religious or not, we all know that evil exists. And this act is nothing but evil. But when things are at the darkest, when the pain becomes unbearable, faith and love will see us through. I remember the story of Horatio Spafford, a lawyer from Chicago, who lost all four of his daughters to a sinking ship. The grief was overwhelming yet he penned one of the most beautiful hymns of all time upon hearing the news.
"When peace like a river, attendeth my way, When sorrows like sea billows roll; Whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to say, It is well, it is well, with my soul."
May God watch over and comfort you all. You are in my heart and prayers today.
James McDonald
14840 119th Place NE, Kirkland, Wash. December 14, 2012

To the Editor:
I am so saddened to hear of the tragedy that happened today at Sandy Hook Elementary today.
I am from Southbury originally and my family all went to Sandy Hook Elementary School. My thoughts and prayers are with all those families and everyone else like me that it has hit hard.
I live in Seattle now and just *never* expected to see this on the news. God Bless.
Jennifer Palmer
11446 1st Avenue, Seattle December 14, 2012

To the Editor:
Having been a kindergarten teacher most of my life, the tragedy that unfolded in your town really touches my heart.
I want all of the people of Newtown to know that we hold you in our thoughts and will be offering prayers for you now, and in the days to come. Please know that all of us are wanting to put our arms around you.
Carolyn Huggins
895 Grimble Court, Sumter, S.C. December 14, 2012

To the Editor:
I know that I am just one of hundreds of thousands whose hearts ache for the parents/families of the lost children and the wounded (physically and mentally) of your town.
My office today held many moments of silence and prayer (of all faiths) to those parents/families and many (most) broke down in tears of sadness at this horrendous tragedy.
It is not much to offer the heartbroken, but perhaps the hundreds of thousands of thoughts and prayers and the few I speak of will offer some minute bit of solace.
Most sincerely,
Sue Lance
2949 SE Steele, Portland, Ore. December 14, 2012

To the Editor:
To all the parents, brothers, sisters and friends at Sandy Hook Elementary School and the whole community of Newtown.
My pain for you is utterly unfathomable. I cannot imagine the horror of what all of you in your community have gone through. My heart is breaking. To lose precious children, wonderful teachers who were mothers and fathers, sisters and brothers, is beyond comprehension.
I will not be able to rest until we find some sensible way to deal with the issue of anyone getting access to semiautomatic guns. It is completely baffling why anyone would need a gun like that and why they are able to get them legally so easily. It's an instrument of death as you so painfully now know. I will not quit until I feel like I've done all I can to eradicate the possibility of anyone, anytime, anywhere having access to these killing machines. I promise to fight for you as I've never fought before. I will write letters, protest, petition, travel to Washington if need be.
This has touched me in a way that nothing else ever has. Maybe it's because I too had a son die young, 22 years old. Not by a gun, but by drugs and I wasn't unable to act during my pain. I was paralyzed by the tragedy. The rest of us, though, can act on your behalf right now. You need to grieve and we, the rest of the country, need to act.
Know that you will always carry this pain with you for the rest of your lives, but, if I'm any example, it changes with time. I'm finally able to live with that painful empty hole in my heart and am able to remember my son in a loving, sweet way, rather than full of sadness. He has a better place in heaven and God had must have had a better plan for him.
People all over this country are sitting down tonight at dinner and saying a prayer for all of you and will think of you not just today, but for a long time to come. We will not forget. We will act on your behalf. You have my word.
My heartfelt condolences,
Christina Ritzmann
Pacific Palisades, California December 14, 2012

To the Editor:
Please know that in your grief and shock you are not alone. We here have shed tears and our hearts will never be the same.
May our love for you help you to bear your sad loss.
Yours with Hope,
Deb Cross
8728 SW Marine Drive, Vancouver, Canada December 14, 2012

To the Editor:
I wish to send my heart-felt condolences to everyone whose lives were turned upside down by the events at Sandy Hook Elementary School. We here in Oregon faced our own tragedy on Tuesday when a person opened fire at the Clackamas Town Center Mall.
Our communities have been forever linked in a week of senseless tragedy.
May God bless the community of Newtown and allow the process of healing to begin.
George Gill
2040 SW Marie Drive, McMinnville, Ore. December 14, 2012

To the Editor:
I wanted to tell all of the parents, friends, family and community that have faced this tragic day that I am praying for you all. The nation is mourning with you. I am so sorry that you all are going through such pain and heartache. I wish I could hold each one of you and make things better.
My prayers are with you this day and the days to come.
Priscilla Horton
12749 Highway 200, Sidney, Mont. December 15, 2012

To the Editor:
As a parent of grown daughters in Seattle, I want to express my deepest condolences to your community. I cannot imagine the pain you and your children are enduring. My deepest sympathies are with all of you. I sincerely hope that our country can come together in a productive conversation regarding how to prevent more of these tragedies.
Marysue Hildebrandt
3254 36th Avenue SW, Seattle, Wash. December 15, 2012

To the Editor:
From the heart of a parent who has grieved over the loss of their child:
Words are meaningless, well-intentioned offers of sorrow or condolences, unanswered questions, the what ifs, the second guesses. I have been there. There is hope. The following poem was found in our son's wallet. For many years, I read it blurred by tears and didn't fully understand. It was only through revelation knowledge that I came to know that this poem was given to us, surviving parents, to offer us a hope and a peace that surpasses understanding:
"Faithful... is He who has promised"
Are you passing through a testing. Is your pillow wet with tears? Is you wonder what the reasons. Why it seem God never hears?
Why it is you have no answer, to your oft-repeated plea, why the heaven still is leaden as you wait on bended knee?
Do you wonder as you suffer, whether God does understand, and if so, why He ignores you, fails to hold you in His hand?
Do black doubts creep in, assail you, fears without, and fears within, till your brave heart almost falters and gives way to deadly sin?
All god's testings have a purpose. Some day you will see the light. All He asks is that you trust Him. Walk by faith and not by sight.
Do not fear when doubts beset you, just remember — He is near; He will never, never leave you, He will always, always hear.
Faithful is He who has promised, He will never let you fall.
Daily will the strength be given. Strength for each and strength for all.
He will gladly share pain with you, He will gladly give you peace. Till your tired and weary body finds its blessed glad release.
When the darkened veil is lifted, then dear heart, you'll understand why

Dear Families:
You don't know me, nor I you. But across the country, in San Diego, I am sharing your grief and your pain. I am acutely aware of the blessings that are downstairs playing on Skype with his friends and the little one in her room with the neighborhood buddy and a slew of American Girl dolls. I am wondering if your blessings would be doing the same thing tonight. If only there was a do-over like Groundhog Day, the movie. I have cried all afternoon, wondering what leaving empty-handed must have felt like today. When the tearful reunions ended and your new dark reality began.
As I type, I wish I had something brilliant to say that would ease this moment. I would never be so pompous to tell you that things happen for a reason, or God must have better plans. I truly don't believe any of this right now. I dropped my 11-year-old at school and warned him to be careful crossing the street to the middle school oddly placed in the wrong quadrant of a "one way" intersection. I didn't warn him to watch out for 20-year-olds with body armor and automatic weapons. The thought, thankfully, never crossed my mind.
I did have a more conscious thought as I dropped my 7-year-old at her elementary school a few minutes before the gates actually opened. It was pajama day here, and I was more concerned about the philosophy of sending kids to school in their pajamas than the possibility of her being gunned down in her classroom. It made me go "hmmm" that the gates weren't quite open, but we live in a quiet neighborhood, I told myself, and there were other adults present.
Once kid-free, on my way to work, I flipped on the radio. Bored with Starz and Oprah, I switched to CNN and nearly lost my breath as the news began to unfold. In the early hours here, there were no reports of death, except for that of the monster that destroyed your lives. So the only thoughts I had, were "how will you encourage your kids to feel safe at school on Monday, but at least he's dead. It will all be okay."
Then the real news was reported. And the three appointments that stood me up stopped even being mildly annoying. I know for sure, you would have traded my day for yours. But selfishly, so would I. I must admit that I am writing this letter to help soothe my broken heart for children and families I don't even know. I know that as the days pass, my life will return to a level normal and calendar pages will be flipped, and the first year, and then ten.
It will never be that way for you.
But if at some place, in your grief, you could know that the world is smaller than you think. And I know for sure that all my friends and all the people I know, and the people they know and anyone with half a heart have you in their arms, hoping that a collective hug from across the nation will hold you up long enough to endure the devastating days ahead.
I wish your weekend was filled with the expected chaos the week before Christmas brings. But reality has played a nasty, evil hand. My heart is broken with yours tonight.
Cindy Rosenthal
2718 Luciernaga Street, San Diego, Calif. December 15, 2012

To The Editor:
I am a career firefighter/paramedic here in south Texas. My thoughts and prayers go out to those that responded to the shooting at the Sandy Hook Elementary School. I hope you seek counseling for those first responders and give them total support, love, and please let them know their fellow firefighters have them in our thoughts. I have seen plenty of tragedy in my 25 years in the service, but nothing like this. What a sad day. I cannot stop thinking of you Home Guard Heroes, and what you are going through now.
Godspeed to your fine community. Find some good out of this awful event. Love one another, and support those who have lost a loved one.
At our department, we have you in prayers here in Texas.
Larry West
116 Thiele Drive, Yoakum, Texas December 15, 2012

To the Editor:
It is with horror that we in South Africa received news of the tragedy at the Sandy Hook Elementary School.
How do we rationalize this abomination? We cannot.
Twenty precious little children, representing the future and a thousand other pretty things, have died prematurely and, needless to say, meaninglessly. The devastation, in the inner precincts of my being has been saddened as I try to gather my thoughts and feelings about the state of the world.
I believe I reflect the feelings and sentiments of my friends in the community of Table View.
To say we are sorry is superfluous, to say we understand would be a lie, to say that you are in our prayers would not alleviate your great pain at the loss of your children.
All we want to say is to believe in the love that created these lovely angels.
When the darkness descends, true love is all we have to console our broken hearts and give true honor to all the children and courageous parents, family and friends.
Remember there is only one senator in this world and that is the loyalty and love of all the parents, family, friends, and the people of Table View.
Sincere regards and love,
Gerald McKenzie
22 Gloucester Road, Table View, Cape Town December 15, 2012

To the Editor:
It is with a heavy heart that I send apologies and condolences to the community, suffering such a horrible, evil act upon their loved ones. As a mother of three adult children, and a 4-year-old grandson, it is impossible for me to wrap my mind over such cowardly acts. The nation is praying together over the pain your community is forced to deal with, for all the Newtown residents that have lost or know someone that lost a loved one.
Our prayers are with all of you. May God give you all strength and courage, for healing of heart, mind, and soul after such a tragic event that no community or person should ever have to face. I pray for the survivors to remain strong, and for your community's unity.
With sincere and deepest sympathies,
Caryl Klaus
1659 SW Tawakoni Road, Benton, Kansas December 15, 2012

Dear All:
It is 7:14 pm on Saturday evening in Brisbane, Australia. My family have been away from home all day as my oldest son competes in an Athletics Carnival. We have returned home to be overwhelmed by the news reports of the tragedy that has befallen your community.

To the Editor
Just wanted to let you know that we are watching the horror from afar, and send our love to all of the people involved in this awful, evil, tragedy.
Tears are being shed by parents across the world.
God Bless
Pat Joyce
115 Caledonia Avenue,
Perth, WA 6028, Australia December 15, 2012

To the Editor:
I was so sadden by your tragedy that I feared trying to go to sleep after a day of tears just springing up at odd times. Then in my mind, I had the picture of a seated Jesus holding out his arms to a bunch of rambunctious smiling children. It gave me such comfort. I'm hoping to put this image in the mind of those grieving instead of the more somber ones.
Marilyn Dougherty
12195 San Vicente, Lakeside, Calif. December 15, 2012

Dear People of Newtown:
Our continued thoughts and prayers are for your town and particularly those families who lost loved ones in this terrible tragedy at Sandy Hook Elementary School. All of America mourns for those children and adults who died. Sincere appreciation is given to those school teachers and staff who remained calm and courageously protected the other children during this horrendous time. May God heal your hearts and comfort you in the days ahead.
Jim and Shirley Irvin
1703 Gold Hill Road, Concord, N.C. December 15, 2012

Dear People of Newtown:
My wife and I watched television with horror and disbelief at the terrible events unfolding in your community. We want to express our very deepest sympathy to all of your community and especially to the families directly affected by this horrific deed. We personally express our sympathy, our community does as well, our entire state and, indeed, all of our country joins in your sorrow at this time.
It is impossible to make sense out of something that makes no sense whatsoever. Nothing anyone can say right now can truly ease the unbearable pain and suffering you are going through now. The passage of time can help you cope with this tragedy even though the pain will never go away completely. Please take comfort in knowing that your dear, sweet children and those adults who were taken as well, are now in God's loving care, and that we who accept that precious gift of eternal life that Christ has given to all of us who know Him, will someday be reunited with those loved ones forever.
Hold onto and remember all the precious memories and wonderful times your loved ones have left you. They will never truly die if you hold them in your heart and minds.
May God bless you all and comfort you at this time.
Dan and Susan Derfler
238 Sherman Street, Galion, Ohio December 15, 2012

Dear Newtown:
Please accept our condolences on this horrible tragedy. We are all heartbroken at the devastating turn of events.
To the families of the precious innocents and staff please accept our sincere expression of sorrow for your loss.
To the wonderful heroic staff and teachers of the school, bless you all for the wonderful courageous way you handled such a terrible catastrophe.
Our hearts and prayers are with you at this sad, sad time.
The DeCare Families
3085 County Route 176, Oswego, N.Y. December 15, 2012

To the Editor:
We are so very sorry for the tragedy that has come upon your town and community members. Our hearts break for the victims, their families and friends, and the survivors. They will forever be in our hearts.
The Toole Family
610 East 17th Place, The Dalles, Ore. December 15, 2012

To the Editor:
May the people of Newtown be comforted by knowing that so many people around the world are grieving their loss.
With sympathy and prayers,
Elizabeth Rogge
618 Woodland Drive, Washington, Kan. December 15, 2012

Dear Beloved Community of Newtown:
Hearing the tragic news was heartbreaking, and we wept for you all. When we moved to Newtown in 1998, we had never lived in New England before and did not know what to expect. It wasn't long before we were in love with this new place we could call home.
For five years, we worked, played, worshipped, and thrived in what we considered an idyllic community. Our children attended St Rose School, I taught first grade there, and we were active members of St Rose of Lima Catholic Church. Meghan and Matthew were confirmed at St Rose, and Mary Kate celebrated her First Communion there. Meghan and I sang in the Folk Group on Sundays. John and I were active volunteers. When 9/11 unfolded, we joined in as our community came together to cry, pray, grieve, and heal.
Now, a horrific tragedy has struck in the very heart of the community where we still have many friends. Innocent children, their teachers, and the staff at Sandy Hook Elementary have lost their lives, and you, their friends and family, are grieving and trying to make sense of the horror. Life as you know it will never be the same.
As you join together in grief, mourning, and profound sadness, please know that we are praying for you all! We pray that God grants you comfort, peace, and healing. We may have moved ten years ago, but our hearts are still there, and our prayers will remain with you in the weeks and months ahead. May God bless you all!
Praying for your Peace,
Trudi, John, Meghan, Matthew, and Mary Kate Bartow
236 Vista Springs Circle, Lexington, S.C. December 15, 2012

To the Editor:
Across our nation our hearts are breaking. Words are not enough to express the love that goes out to everyone. Try to believe and feel the love pouring into your town and your schools. Having been an elementary school secretary for 20 years, I feel the nightmare.
With heartfelt prayers I reach out to you and will continue doing so. You are not alone in your grief.
Marge Bergland

To the Editor:

Our nation morns with your community and the families whose loved ones were taken from you. May God give you comfort and peace as you work through the evil that befell your community.

Our hearts are aching, our focus wondering as we cannot imagine the pain you are going through. Reach out to your neighbor, your community, and your nation for whatever you need. We are here for you. We are so very sorry for your loss.

Jeff Moore

Eugene, Ore December 14, 2012

It is you had to suffer, why you could not feel His hand giving strength when it was needed, giving power and peace within. Giving joy thru tears and trial, giving victory over sin.

So till then just keep on trusting, thru the sunshine and the rain, thru the tears and thru the heart-aches, thru the smiles and thru the pain.

Knowing that our Father watches, knowing daily strength He'll give. Victory for each passing hour, this is life, so let us live!

Grieving with you,

Irma McBride

4560 Beverly Glen Drive, Oceanside, Calif. December 15, 2012

Tonight, there is no noise in our house, no Christmas Carols, no television, no radio. There are no familiar sounds of laughter from our two boys. But as I write this I know that these sounds will return to us as our sadness eases. My wife and I cannot and hope to never have to feel the loss and grief that you are feeling now.

All that is left to say at this time is that our family sends Love and Prayers to you, and we hope and pray that somehow, sometime, the pain will lessen enough for you to carry on.

Allan Meadows

2 Darling Close, Calamvale,

Brisbane, Australia December 15, 2012

253 Shamrock Court, Eugene, Ore. December 15, 2012

To the Editor:

I am writing to extend my deepest sympathy to the families and the entire town over the unspeakable tragedy that has happened. I come from a small town also. My heart is breaking for everyone.

Again I have no words to console. America is hurting with you. America's hearts are breaking.

Pearlene Curry

415 East Sherman Street, Mount Vernon, Ind. December 15, 2012

To the Editor:
I have been watching news reports of the truly terrible events in your local school.
My heart goes out to everyone affected. Please know that all the children and adults will be in my prayers tonight.
Sincerely,
Mary Beamon
32 Hanover Court, Penzance Cornwall TR18 4UJ
United Kingdom December 14, 2012

To the Editor:
I just wanted to send my love, thoughts, and prayers to the parents who have lost their beautiful innocent children in this awful tragedy, and also to the families of the teachers who gave their lives trying to protect their charges. My heart is heavy, as I can only imagine the pain and heartache being felt in the town.
I pray God, that they all find the strength to see them through these dark days, as they come to terms with their loss. Deepest and sincerest condolences.
Joanne Crumplin
44 Eden Terrace,
Northumberland, United Kingdom December 15, 2012

To the Editor:
Having lived in Newtown a long time ago, and owning a store there, my late husband and I met many people. My heart today is heavy as I sit here and watch what is going on at the Sandy Hook Elementary School.
Just wanted to let every one know I am sending prayers to everyone there.
Jenny Kampf
4722 East Bell Road, Phoenix, Ariz. December 14, 2012

To the Editor:
We are a couple from Sudbury, Ontario, Canada. We have been following with horror, the overwhelmingly heart-breaking tragedy your town is suffering. There of course is absolutely nothing we can do of a concrete nature to help you, but we did want you to know we are grieving with you.
The depths of agony during this terrible time cannot be calculated. Our hearts are aching for your devastated families as they face a very different tomorrow.
We send our deepest prayers that God will pour healing into your collective hearts.
With sorrow,
John and Wendy Noble
Sudbury, Ontario December 14, 2012

To the Editor:
I am sitting here at home watching the BBC news concerning the tragedy that has befallen your town. I am writing to you, so through your publication, I can express the sheer horror of what has happened.
I am sure that I can speak for everyone here in Worthing, England, and my home city of Derry, Northern Ireland, and the United Kingdom generally, of our sorrow at your loss. May God be with all those families affected at this time.
Paul Hegarty
Worthing, West Sussex, BN14 9EY, U.K. December 14, 2012

To the Editor:
First off, my prayers go out to the families of all the victims.
I am writing you as a person that has gone from heartbreak over this tragedy, to anger and rage, to numbness, fatigue, then to being totally disgusted with this totally senseless act. There is *no* reason for this senseless act to have happened.
We need to say our prayers for the families, but each and every one of us need to pay attention to our children. Your children and our children now live in fear of *when* is this going to happen again. Its incumbent on us, our households, our communities to make sure this never happen again.
How can your community make these children feel safe again?
My suggestion is to immediately tear down that school this tragedy happened in and build a new school.
I feel that the parents of these children will not allow the kids to return to this school anyway. I would not.
Another suggestion would be to immediately petition other schools to allow students from Newtown to attend theirs for the rest of this year and if necessary next year.
If money is an issue to build a new school, I for one will be donating $10 toward a new school fund.
Start a website and I'm sure within months your building fund will be met for a fine new Newtown Elementary School these children will be ecstatic and so ready to enter its doors.
Sincerely Yours,
Nancy Bloss
1531 Manor Hill Drive, Quincy Illinois December 14, 2012

To the Editor:
In light of today's tragedy, I am making an executive decision to use the concert raffle on December 15 to help families affected by the shooting. All money raised will be sent to Newtown Youth & Family Services: http://www.newtownyouthandfamilyservices.org/donate.php.
The prize for whoever wins the raffle is a free one-season choir membership (Jazz, Rock, Teen Group Class, or Theory/Sight-Reading class — winner's choice).
There will be a blurb in our program about it, and we will be selling raffle tickets before the show, as well as at intermission. The drawing will be during the second half of the show.
Tony Lechner
Brattleboro, Vt. December 14, 2012

To the Editor:
We have watched with great sadness the events of today, Friday December 14. It is difficult to imagine how the parents, families, friends, and community are feeling. As a parent, I can only share the pain that is in my heart for you today. I want you to know that my family, as well, I believe I can say that every person in Canada is thinking of and praying for you at this time.
Our love and prayers.
Anne Sulzberger
4352 Strathcona Road,
Vancouver British Columbia December 14, 2012

Dear Families, Parents, Children and the People of Newtown:
Our hearts and prayers go out to all of you at this devastating time.
I am a first grade teacher here in a small town in California and can imagine how horrible a time this is. May you find comfort and healing from each other — and in also knowing of the love and prayers coming to you at this time of need. God bless you.
Suzy Quail
165 Smith Court, Auburn, Calif. December 14, 2012

To the Editor:
I know no one from Connecticut. Before December 14, I would

To the Editor:
I just wanted to express my sympathy to the good people of Newtown, and to let you know that my family in Lebanon, Mo., stands with you
Timothy Mace
275 Harris Lane, Lebanon, Mo. December 14, 2012

To the Editor:
I need to do something — my daughter came home from school today. Every parent expects that. We trust our most dear possessions to go to school and come home.
How can I help? I work from home and can be available for anything. Please let me know if I can do anything to help.
James Thompson
5 4th Street, Wallingford, CT December 14, 2012

To the Editor:
I want you to know we are shedding tears and mourning with the Newtown community in regard to the loss of your beloved children, grandchildren, brothers, sisters, and friends.
Please know that many prayers in this community in Iowa have been lifted up to God, that his arms will enfold you and comfort you, and in time, bring you peace and hope.
Deanne North
221 West Florence Avenue, Glenwood, Iowa December 14, 2012

To the Editor:
We live far away, but our hearts are in Newtown today. We are hurting with your community and pray that healing and strength prevail.
Please accept our deep sympathy for all the families affected. You will stay in our hearts.
Best Wishes,
The Meyer Family
9890 Summer Oaks Drive Roswell, Ga. December 14, 2012

To the Editor:
Words cannot express the pain and grief that we here in East Rockaway, N.Y., feel for the families that lost their children to a horrific crime. Our prayers and thoughts are with each and everyone of you. Today my son asked what happened at Sandy Hook Elementary School mommy and for the first time in my life I couldn't give my son an explanation. I was speechless. No words can ever explain this cruel act set upon innocent children. My heart goes out to all of you.
Maria Halik
63 Cambridge Court, East Rockaway, N.Y. December 15, 2012

To the Editor:
My husband and I share thoughts of love, concern, and healing with your community and especially families whose loved ones lost a life today. We were both elementary and middle school teachers, but first and foremost, we are a parent of a child.
So difficult to understand how something like this can happen. Know not only our thoughts and care are sent from miles away, but so many within the country share your pain and grief. May your community heal with our love.
Susan Soroka
2300 South La Corta Drive, Tempe, Ariz. December 14, 2012

To the Residents of Newtown:
I am a long way from beautiful Newtown, but it feels as though I am right there. The ties are not broken. I taught high school there many years back and lived a big portion of my life in Southbury, Oxford, and Woodbury. My writing career began when I was reporting and writing columns for *The Bee*. Many of my former students are still there. I remember Newtown's beauty, its good people, how it offered the best of life.
Like people all over the country, I am heartbroken. We all offer our prayers. But beyond condolences, let us honor these innocent, lost lives by trying, really trying, to find a way to stop this madness.
June Moore Neal
1 Harbourside Drive, Delray Beach, Fla. December 15, 2012

To the Editor:
As an ordinary Canadian watching events unfold in your community I would be grateful if you would convey to the victims families and residents our condolences. We are so sad.
As your cousins north of the border, Canadians have a special kinship with Americans, as we are so intertwined. Words fail us at this time and we feel your grief.
Yours faithfully,
Trevor Parry
1101 Chateau Crescent, Orleans,
Ottawa, Canada December 15, 2012

To the Editor:
I know that there are no words of comfort for the unspeakable acts that were committed at Sandy Hook Elementary School. I, along with the entire country, am grieving for those lost, the survivors and all the families of Newtown who are experiencing unimagined pain. Please know that you are in my thoughts and prayers.
Sincerely,
Denise Houchins
7889 Kentucky Highway 185,
Bowling Green, Ky. December 15, 2012

To the Editor:
I was driving my semi-truck and when I heard the news about the shooting I had to pull over and stop. I can not describe the extent of shock and horror that I felt. I was completely overwhelmed by these emotions.
I wish to express my most heartfelt and sincere condolences to all. I will pray that all who are suffering from this horror receive comfort and healing from all these grievous and horrific wounds.
I have heard media reports of people taking down Christmas decorations. I request that this stop happening. Instead continue with the celebration of Christmas because this is a celebration of life and peace, a celebration of good will and charity. Let it now be a celebration for the lives of those lost and a beginning of the healing and rejection of violence that lessens us all.
Sincerely,
David Lenzi
1-10625 112th Street,
Edmonton, Alberta, Canada December 15, 2012

To the Editor:
I have no idea whether or not this will ever make it into your local newspaper.
Please, please know that there are so many millions of people around the world praying for all of you, especially for those who lost their precious babies.
As a retired school principal, I hope that the superintendent will seriously consider having the Sandy Hook students *never* go back to that physical school again. Surely, there are spaces available in intermediate and high schools for them.

To The Editor:
It is a cruel irony that on the day (nearly to the hour) that students at Mattacheese Middle School in Yarmouth, Mass., were creating a Peace Garden on their premises that the horror in Newtown was occurring.
The first stone in the garden had been laid at 12:12 on 12/12/12, but the work by the students was actually done during the morning of Friday, December 14. The science plan was to design and construct a phenology garden (one that measures natural cycles), but construction had been delayed until Friday for one reason or another.
On Monday, December 17, we will dedicate the new garden to the students and teachers who perished on Friday. It shall now be known as the Peace Garden. May God bless your community.
John Sinopoli
Grade 6 Teacher
Mattacheese Middle School
400 Higgins Crowell Road,
Yarmouth, Mass. December 16, 2012

To the Editor:
Twenty little angels went to Heaven today, Wrapped in love on snow white wings showing them the way, Six more angels followed, to make sure they got there safe, Today is such a sad, sad day, our hearts a broken place.
Tonight we pray for parents whose homes have empty beds, Where just last night sleeping sound were 20 peaceful heads, How we understand this day takes more than we can grasp, To make our world a safer place is not too much to ask.
Get down on bended knee and pray, bow your head and cry, There is no one to question, but someone tell me why? To take a life so small and sweet brings us to our knees, What reason could there possibly be for such a tragedy.
So gather round all you love and hug them hard and tight, and if things aren't as they should be, tonight you make it right, God bless these innocent people called to Heaven today, And remember families lost in grief, with broken hearts we pray.
Marianne King
3867 Hassfurt Drive, Hamilton, Ohio December 16, 2012

Newtown Citizens:
It is Sunday morning and as I watch the news of the horrific loss in your community, a few questions from Newtown citizens has moved me to write this letter. They asked: "Is anyone else affected by this tragedy? Is anyone outside of this area upset or does life just go on because this is just another news story?"
As a 30-year school teacher, I will take the liberty of speaking for every school teacher everywhere: Newtown, our hearts are broken, too. We grieve with you. We grieve the loss of each and every child and each and every adult. We gather on our breaks and at lunch time and cry with our colleagues. We sob when we are alone. We discuss how to keep our children (students) safe under similar circumstances.
Newtown, our hearts are broken, too. We pray for you and your loved ones. We await word on how we can help you.
Sincerely,
Christine Notareschi
Girard Elementary School, Girard, Ohio December 16, 2012

To the Editor:
I cannot feel the full pain that you good people now feel. I can only tell you that my tears, our tears, join yours. All love, all comfort to you all.
Bill Nevins
2305 9th Street NW, Albuquerque, N.M. December 15, 2012

To the Editor:
Just wanted you to know that your tragedy has touched and broken our hearts. Even though we are far away and do not know any of the families involved, we struggle as well with the "why." Our love, thoughts, prayers and hugs go out to every family who has been touched by this atrocity.
Sincerely,
Lori and Mallory Turner
Anderson, Ind. December 14, 2012

To The Editor:
Fondly to the families, friends, first responders, teachers, staff and all the residents of Newtown... It is with saddened hearts we send deepest sympathy, thoughts, and prayers for all of you.
Know that so many across the country are remembering and thinking of your broken hearts and grieving with you.
As a mom of three children, grandmom of four girls, wife, and sister I cannot imagine losing any of our family in such a tragic way. We keep you all in our hearts and prayers.
Beverly Boroski
9008 Cinnebar Drive, Indianapolis, Ind. December 16, 2012

To the Editor
My heart goes out to the parents, and relatives of the children, and adults killed Friday at your local school. I wish to offer my condolences, and those of my church family here in Hinesville. Everyone, everywhere is in shock, but we all share your suffering. I prayed that God may comfort, heal, and love the families of these little children. My heart is also broken, and I share your grief. May God Bless, and keep you close.
Very truly yours,
Johnny P. Howard
244 North Maple Drive, Hinesville, Georgia December 16, 2012

To the Editor:
No one can know the depth of grief of many in your town following Friday's shootings. I join the nation in prayer for everyone affected. Just know that 20 angels flew to heaven that day, accompanied by their teachers and staff, and now, all are watching over those that they love here on earth.
May your hearts eventually find peace.
Kipster Joseph
1865 Harrison, Muskegon, Mich. December 15, 2012

To the Editor:
In this age of information, you will, I suspect, be overwhelmed with letters in the days to come.
All I want to offer is my solidarity and sorrow. I could not read today's paper without tears. On the way home, I pulled over and cried some more. I know I am not alone.
The world weeps with you, Newtown. We share your grief from afar, and wish you strength in the days and years to come.
Take whatever solace you can find in the company of family and friends. You are in all of our hearts.
With respect,
Bob Aldrich
2937 44th Avenue South,
Minneapolis, Minn. December 16, 2012

To the Editor:
It is nearly impossible to know what to say at this desperately sad time but I just wanted to send love, care, kindness, and sin-

Dear People of Newtown:
Our country Norway was hit by a massacre last year and 77 young people were murdered.
My wife Bjoerg and I want to give you all our deepest sympathy in your moment of grief. We also want to give you all our love. You are all in the minds of the Norwegian people!!
Yours sincerely,
Bjoerg and Harald Gagnum
2750 Gran, Hovsgutua 42, Norway December 15, 2012

To the Editor:
I just want you, and all the people of your community, especially those effected by the recent tragedy at Sandy Hook, how deeply sorry I am, at the loss of so many wonderful people. My heart goes out to you all. Be sure, you are all in my thoughts and prayers at this dreadful time. May Almighty God bring you all a measure of comfort and added strength, as you face the difficult times ahead. That's all I want to say. God bless you all.
Dave Whiteside
3 Corrie Drive, Bebington, Wirral, England December 16, 2012

To the Editor:
Such a senseless waste of beautiful lives. The deepest sympathy from my family to all of yours.
Alan Grigor
26 Date Crescent,
Halswell Christchurch, New Zealand December 16, 2012

To the Editor:
I am a father and grandfather. I felt I had to contact you over the tragedy that has hit your town. The heartbreak that you feel is shared here in the Highlands of Scotland and, I am sure, throughout the world. We cry with you and for you. We look at our own little people and cannot imagine the pain you feel. But be assured, throughout the world there are millions of good people thinking of you.
Nick Hunter
Inverness, Scotland December 16, 2012

To the Editor:
I know you will get thousands of letters like this one, so I will come right to the point. I live in the state of Wisconsin, in the county of Winnebago, in the city of Oshkosh, in a house on Doty Street, with my wife and child. In every state, county, city, and street across this nation, and well beyond its borders, we are *all* weeping; we are all thinking of and praying for you. We are not within a millionth of an inch of being close to understanding what your community is going though, but in our hearts we are *all* standing next to you. We hope our empathy helps, and even understand if it doesn't. Many of us —myself included — are willing to do *anything* to help ease your pain and suffering. If you need money to build a new school, tell us. If you need our skills and need us to travel to your community, tell us.
If you need us to keep you in our hearts, well, we already are. No matter how far away we are, we are your neighbors.
Robb McAllister
1857 Doty Street, Oshkosh, Wis. December 16, 2012

To the Editor:
My heart is full of pain and sorrow for your beautiful community and the precious children and teachers that were lost on Friday. As a teacher and a parent myself, what happened in your small town is the worst nightmare all of America fears. And so, we are crying with you and we want to wrap our arms around you to let you know how very sorry we are for what has happened.
Each year my students read *The Diary of Anne Frank*; the story of a young girl whose life was also senselessly and tragically cut short. Anne's most famous words from her diary were simple: "In spite of everything, I still believe people are really good at heart." I know the people of Newtown are really good at heart and that you will take care of each other in the difficult days ahead. All of America will be with you in their prayers.
May God bless your community and the loved ones that were lost.
Peggy Hoeger
3280 Bittersweet Lane, Dubuque, Iowa December 16, 2012

To the Editor:
It is heartbreaking to think of those who have had thier beautiful children robbed from them at such an innocent age. They had so much life ahead of them — now snuffed out by one person. My thoughts are with the parents and loved ones of all who died that tragic day. Let's not forget the injured, and pray for their recovery.
We, the People of Alabama, grieve with you. God Bless America.
Dene Dyer
4101 Cloverdale Estates, Northport, Ala. December 16, 2012

To all the residents and families of Newtown,
At this heart wrenching time you are all in our hearts. For all those lost in this tragedy, may the Lord bless them and keep them, and make His face to shine upon them and bring them peace. May the support of your friends and surrounding communities help you through this unimaginable grief.
The White Family
Heffley Creek,
British Columbia, Canada December 15, 2012

To the Editor:
Darkness surrounds me
And the silence of the night is deafening
My heart weighs heavy
And tears are recurring
This pain is not mine personally
And an entire nation is grieving
Seven adults and twenty babies
Are not resting in their beds where they should be sleeping
My mind unsettled and unbelieving
Goes to images it cannot fathom
My soul wails helpless
For families I'll never know in place called Newtown
Little hamlet, little haven
Who knew Friday would be such a sad day
Children learning, laughing, singing
Still too young to find their own way
Beginning normally, just another morning
Filled with so much promise
Who could have known this morning
Would hold a last or lost good-bye kiss
Christmas wish lists, Christmas presents
That will never be realized or opened
I can sympathize, I can empathize
But this is pain I've never known
Still it haunts me, still it hurts me
And these tears I've cried are real
Children should be cherished, should be held tight
Not devoured by evil

have been unable to find Newtown on a map. Now, along with millions, possibly billions of parents, I grieve for your community and its tragic loss.

While I can try and convey my feelings, simple words will never truly do. My heart grieves for Newtown. My head cannot process the information in a way that allows me to understand why this incident happened. I hope and pray for you to find peace, and while it may not come quickly, it will come. I send a prayer for Newtown wrapped in love.

Alan England
1460 Franklin Circle, Dacula Ga. December 14, 2012

It is my very humble opinion that the school should be razed as soon as possible and rebuilt, perhaps on the same grounds, but in a different model and configuration. Not only for the students, but for the teachers and staff, this needs to happen.

I am a thousand miles away in south Louisiana, but I have been paralyzed by grief and distress for two days. We are *all* praying for *all* of you: parents, children, teachers, staff, law enforcement, and citizens of your sweet town. We weep with you.

Nancy McKay
13384 Natchez Court,
Baton Rouge, Agoma, Wisc. December 15, 2012

cere heartfelt condolences to your whole community. We, like the rest of the world, have watched and listened as the events unfolded, with disbelief and horror. The wave of compassion I feel just from people in my UK town is echoed throughout the world.

Just from the news reports it is easy to see what a strong, caring, and inspirational community you are. Please know you are not alone and there are millions praying with and for you all.

God Bless.

Sarah McColm
65 Sandown park,
Royal Tunbridge Wells, Kent UK December 16, 2012

I watched my children go off to school
Saw them grow and have babies of their own
How these families must be suffering
In houses that no longer feel like homes
I know there are no words of comfort
Nothing that can ever make this right
Families of Newtown I may not know you
But you do not grieve alone tonight

Michelle Trace
2050 West Mendocino Avenue,
Stockton, Calif. December 16, 2012

—White House photo

Friday, December 14, 2012—

President Obama: 'Too Many Of These Tragedies'

President Barack Obama made the following statement Friday afternoon in the Briefing Room of the White House:

"This afternoon, I spoke with Governor Malloy and FBI Director Mueller. I offered Governor Malloy my condolences on behalf of the nation, and made it clear he will have every single resource that he needs to investigate this heinous crime, care for the victims, counsel their families.

"We've endured too many of these tragedies in the past few years. And each time I learn the news I react not as a President, but as anybody else would — as a parent. And that was especially true today. I know there's not a parent in America who doesn't feel the same overwhelming grief that I do.

"The majority of those who died today were children — beautiful little kids between the ages of 5 and 10 years old. They had their entire lives ahead of them — birthdays, graduations, weddings, kids of their own. Among the fallen were also teachers — men and women who devoted their lives to helping our children fulfill their dreams.

"So our hearts are broken today — for the parents and grandparents, sisters and brothers of these little children, and for the families of the adults who were lost. Our hearts are broken for the parents of the survivors as well, for as blessed as they are to have their children home tonight, they know that their children's innocence has been torn away from them too early, and there are no words that will ease their pain.

"As a country, we have been through this too many times. Whether it's an elementary school in Newtown, or a shopping mall in Oregon, or a temple in Wisconsin, or a movie theater in Aurora, or a street corner in Chicago — these neighborhoods are our neighborhoods, and these children are our children. And we're going to have to come together and take meaningful action to prevent more tragedies like this, regardless of the politics.

"This evening, Michelle and I will do what I know every parent in America will do, which is hug our children a little tighter and we'll tell them that we love them, and we'll remind each other how deeply we love one another. But there are families in Connecticut who cannot do that tonight. And they need all of us right now. In the hard days to come, that community needs us to be at our best as Americans. And I will do everything in my power as President to help.

"Because while nothing can fill the space of a lost child or loved one, all of us can extend a hand to those in need — to remind them that we are there for them, that we are praying for them, that the love they felt for those they lost endures not just in their memories but also in ours.

"May God bless the memory of the victims and, in the words of Scripture, heal the brokenhearted and bind up their wounds."

The President also issued a proclamation honoring the victims of the tragedy, ordering US flags to be flown at half-staff until sunset on December 18.

President, Clergy, Officials Unite Begin The Healing

First Selectman Pat Llodra told the gathering, "This is a defining moment for Newtown, but it will not define us."

Governor Dannel P. Malloy referenced the music and words of "Amazing Grace," played at the service, as the anthem for first responders.

A somber President Obama acknowledged victims' family members as he entered the auditorium.

(continued from page S-1)

The President also referenced his own experience as a parent in his remarks, sharing some thoughts that surely had to touch all parents who were with him in the Newtown High School auditorium and gym, as well as those watching across the nation and around the globe.

"Someone once described the joy and anxiety of parenthood as the equivalent of having your heart outside of your body all the time, walking around. With their very first cry, this most precious, vital part of ourselves — our child — is suddenly exposed to the world, to possible mishap or malice," he said.

"Every parent knows there is nothing we will not do to shield our children from harm. And yet, we also know that with that child's very first step, and each step after that, they are separating from us; that we won't — that we can't always be there for them."

He acknowledged what every parent fears but eventually endures, the sickness and setbacks and broken hearts and disappointments.

"And we learn that our most important job is to give them what they need to become self-reliant and capable and resilient, ready to face the world without fear," President Obama continued. "And we know we can't do this by ourselves. It comes as a shock at a certain point where you realize, no matter how much you love these kids, you can't do it by yourself. That this job of keeping our children safe, and teaching them well, is something we can only do together, with the help of friends and neighbors, the help of a community, and the help of a nation.

"And in that way," the President said, "we come to realize that we bear a responsibility for every child because we're counting on everybody else to help look after ours; that we're all parents; that they're all our children. This is our first task — caring for our children. It's our first job. If we don't get that right, we don't get anything right. That's how, as a society, we will be judged."

Victims' families and the Sandy Hook Elementary School community were invited to the interfaith service at the high school.

Malloy's Comments

Prior to President Obama's turn at the podium, Governor Malloy spoke seemingly off the cuff at first, tapping into the comforting music that was being provided by Fiona Smith Sutherland as a prelude to the memorial service, and the song "Amazing Grace" that was being played on piano as he entered the auditorium a few moments before the President.

He reminded the audience that the song is as much an anthem adopted by police, fire, and emergency workers, as it is a lyrical message to those seeking a glimpse of light in an otherwise dark moment.

"It also speaks to the power of faith," the governor said. "A faith that is, after all at its very core, a gift from God. A faith in which we find comfort and hope and compassion. A faith in which we are given the power to go on."

Governor Malloy then talked about how the changing of seasons will forever serve as a reminder to him about the senseless massacre in Sandy Hook.

"Let me assure you that every time I see the beginning of a snowfall, I will be thinking of those 27 souls lost just a few days ago," he said. "And when the flowers start to come out of the ground — when they rise up — I will know we are in touch with those we have lost in the last few days."

The governor also thanked Mrs Llodra whose very brief introductory words may have been the most poignant of all for the gathering of Newtowners and their immediate loved ones. She said she will continue to work in the days and months after the television crews, other government officials and outsiders who converged on the town offering assistance are gone.

"I know Newtown will prevail," Mrs Llodra said of the tens of thousands in the community suffering through the aftermath of Friday's shooting. "It is a defining moment for Newtown, but it will not define us.

Msgr Robert Weiss of St Rose Church and the Rev Jack Tanner of Newtown Christian Church were among the clergy who led the service.

"We are defined by acts of courage, acts of love, and by our continuing commitment and love for our children and families," she added.

Monsignor Robert Weiss of St Rose of Lima was obviously struck by the first selectman's brief words, as well as her demeanor and presence on the scene in those agonizing hours Friday as she shed tears and shared embraces with survivors gathered at the Sandy Hook fire headquarters where they gathered.

As Monsignor Weiss thanked Mrs Llodra for her strength, the auditorium erupted into a standing ovation that rivaled the applause welcoming President Obama, and she turned from her seat in the front row where she sat beside the President to acknowledge the outburst with a wave, a nod and mouthing the words, "thank you."

Clergy Offer Words And Prayers

The memorial service began with a welcoming from Reverend and Senior Minister Matt Crebbin of the Newtown Congregational Church who expressed what would become a defining theme for the evening and the community's future.

"We are all here with you," he said turning his gaze toward an area of the auditorium where Sandy Hook Elementary School staff and families were seated. "We are all in this together."

Arm in arm, Rabbi Shaul Praver of Congregation Adath Israel and Reverend Mel Kawakami of Newtown United Methodist Church were next on the dais. With his voice rising in a beautiful Hebrew prayer for the mourning, Rabbi Praver raised his arms as if to try and embrace every single person in the room, as well as all those millions watching and listening to broadcasts of the service.

And Reverend Kawakami acknowledged that no matter which street or corner of the community, the events of December 14 will forever be a horrible but shared community experience. Speaking about the victims, he remarked, "If we did not know them ourselves, we knew someone who did."

The program continued as clusters of the town's spiritual leaders imparted words and gestures that encouraged Newtown to grieve, but also to take its first tentative steps to begin moving past the previously inconceivable acts from Friday morning. Among the others who spoke were Kathie Adams-Shepherd, rector of the Trinity Episcopal Church; Jim Solomon, pastor of the New Hope Community Church; and Jane Sibley of the Newtown United Methodist Church, who provided a prayer dedicated to the many hundreds of emergency responders who rushed to the scene that morning.

John Woodall, leader of the Baha'i community was joined by Leo McIlrath, ecumenical chaplain of the Lutheran Home of Southbury, who offered prayers for the counselors, clergy and caregivers, as well as Jack Tanner of Newtown Christian Church.

Adding another voice in song, young Jason Graves and Muadh Bhavnagarwala of the regional AL Hedaya Islamic Center offered passages from the Koran, and asking Allah to grant "families the strength to endure the unendurable."

Throughout the gathering, the high school auditorium was lined with state police, law enforcement and emergency workers, including many town firefighters and most of the Newtown Volunteer Ambulance Corps who were first on the scene with vehicles and equipment, along with dozens of responding EMS colleagues. Sadly, too few victims required transport to a hospital that devastating morning.

And as a chilly drizzle fell, hundreds who could not make it inside for the service listened to the proceedings through public address speakers. Many were wrapped in blankets provided by Red Cross volunteers and holding candles in memory of those who began the day December 14, much like those on September 11, and the mornings of so many other faith rattling incidents that have taken away too many loved ones, too soon.

A large crowd waited outside the auditorium, many of them holding candles.

President Obama reflected on the prayers and comments of Newtown's clergy. —Bee Photos, Bobowick